

TIRUVANNAMALAI

Thiruvannamalai

By

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Dr. S. Meyyappan was a Professor in Annamalai University. Research in Tirukkural, Saivite Hymns, Tamil Music and Tamil Education are his life breath. He is a Member of the Poets' Association and the Publishing Branch of the University, which duties he has been discharging with commendable excellence. He has instituted Endowments in several Universities in Tamil Nadu. Having authored sixteen books, he has knocked off the first prize of the Tamil Nadu Government for his book `Tagore'. He has carved a niche for himself in the art of Publishing. He has set his goal very high to release Tamil Books of a very progressive nature.

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FOREWORD

Dr. S. Meyyappan, Annamalai University

An English-man once accosted Thiru T.K.C. and mocked him saying 'You, Indians, lack a sense of love of nature. T.K.C. with disarming smile replied "Yes, We do not love Nature, we WORSHIP it". Crestfallen the aften walked away. The substance is that it is not the physical attraction that counts, but the inner core of sublimity. For Indians, rivers, mountains and every bit of nature is holy and divine. And they are worshipped through festivals. Many Sthalas have sprung up just to bring home this truth.

Supreme Truth is unfathomable and inexpressible. A Sthala, Thiruvannamalai in South India illustrates this substance better than any other place.

In that town is a mountain which is as old as creation itself. Geologists have confirmed that this is the oldest mountain and that a fiery mass cooled to form a hill. So famous is the mountain that the town itself takes its name after this Annamalai. Thiru is an auspicious prefix. Many are the Seers who have obtained enlightenment in the shade of this holy hill - Guhai Namasivayar Arunagiri Nadhar, Seshadri Swamigal, Ramana Maharishi and a host of others.

No wonder; pilgrims flock from every corner of the world to see. But books to guide them properly are lacking. This book by a versatile author takes us to every part of this Sthala, pouring out information. It is not an arm-chair travellogue but a literary piece. Pictures enhance the value of this book.

The study of Thiruvannamalai has necessarily to be in terms of Tamil literature and Hindu Religion, especially Saiva Cult, one cannot be read without the other. Every attempt has been made to explain in detail and readers are quite welcome to offer their suggestion where and when they meet with difficulties for a proper understanding. We will certainly incorporate improvements in our subsequent edition. The centre of attraction of Thiruvannamalai is its main temple. So much has been said about this temple; to put it in other words Tamil Literature had done service to the study of Lord Siva.

The Publishers too have co-ordinated with the author in presenting this interesting book. The presentation is alluring and will tempt every one to visit this Sthala.

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Thiruvannamalai

CHAPTER 1
Sacred Thiruvannamalai

"Arohara to Annamalaian," - this ecstasic devotional chant reverberates through the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu. This prayer inspires the heart of the devotees inducing Divine grace.

Of all the holy names of Siva, that which stands foremost is 'Haran,' Devotee's derive supreme peace and happiness by repeating this name in quick succession. While there are several great shrines in the glorious Tamil Nadu of our sacred Bharata land, it is only Annamalai that has attained fame in the holy chorus chant 'Hara-Hara'. There is also a reason for this Annamalai sthala to shine with a special greatness and grandeur. The holy name 'Haran' belongs solely to Annamalaian. The counterpart of 'Haran'- the name of Siva, is 'Ari' the name of the goddess. Parasakti is the essential primary energy for all goddesses in the form of Manonmani, Lakshmi or Kalaimagal. The same Parasakti stands as the supreme goddess 'Ari' by the side of 'Haran' the Lord of Brahma and all Devas and this has been eulogised by saint Thirunavukkarasar in his psalms.

This combined form of Haran and Ari is Ardanarisvara. In Annamalai it is the Ardanarisvara who reigns supreme. The devotional chant of 'Arohara' is only, the praise of this Lord. Hara-Hara has become 'Arohara'. It is for this reason that the holy Chant 'Annamalaiyarukku Arohara' has become the symbol for Annamalai. Saiva Ellappa Navalar the gifted poet has sung that it is in the fertile sthala of Arunai that Arahara sounds like an ocean's roar.

The location of the Sthala:

The Saivite holy sthala Thiruvannamalai is in North Arcot District the present Samburayar District.

Thiruvannamalai is the Taluk as well as a beautiful town in this district. There is a railway station on the Villuppuram - Katpadi rail route, 226 kms from Madras. The town stands on an elevation of 266 ft (79.80 M) above sea-level.

Significance of its Name:

In ancient times, the term 'Annamalai' meant an inaccessible mountain. The word 'Thiru' was prefixed to signify its greatness, and coupled with the two terms, it came to he called Thiruvannamalai.

Maha-Vishnu and Brahma puffed up with arrogance sought to perceive the end and beginning of Siva. Vishnu took the form of a boar and started searching Siva's terminal, while Brahma assumed the form of a Swan and commenced seeking the head of Siva. Siva, stood in the form of Light - Fire just to snub their vanity. Thiruvannamalai, is the sthala where the Lord Siva took the form of Fire, This anecdote has been praised by Thirugnana Sambanda by a psalm.

Because Lord Sive assumed the form of Fire to be out of reach for Vishnu and Brahama here, the place took the name Annamalai.

'Annal', is a special name for Siva. That is the reason Gnanasambanda speaks of the greatness as the 'shadow of Annal'. The Fire-light form assumed by Annal became the mountain of this Sthala. Hence this mountain came to be known as Annal Malai, slowly corrupted to Annamalai.

That which cannot be approached, the inaccessible mountain, is Annamalai. Because the Lord Siva took the inaccessible form of Fire, neither the crest nor the root could he approached, it got the sacred name Annamalai.

This term Annamalai, was called Arunachala, Arunagiri in sanskrit. Aruna means crimson colour. Arunachalam means the red mountain, (achala means immovable). As Siva Stood in the form of Fire it became a Fire Mountain. A mountain of Fire is naturally red in colour.

The names of the Sthala

This Thiruvannamalai sthala is also known by the names Arunagiri, Annamalai, Arunachalam ,Arunai, Sonagiri and Sonachalam. Arunai is only the corrupt form of the name Arunagiri, Arunamalai and Arunachalam. All these names signify only one thing-the Fire Mountain.

True to the convention of calling this sthala by various names stressing the prime name Fire Mountain, to this day the mountain of this sthala is clothed in a crimson light like Fire at dawn, when the Sun rises in the East.

Names of the God and Goddesses.

The Deity enshrined in this sthala, who bestows grace, has innumerable names: Annamalaiyan, Adhirunkazhalan, Kannaramuthan, Kaliyuga meyyan, Thiyagan Devaroyan, Parimala Vasantha Rajan, Abinaya Bhujangarajan, Vasantarayan, Puzhugn, Iraivan, Puzhuguni Pradhapan, Malaimel Marunthan, Manmadanathan, Vasantha Vinodhan, Vayantha Vizha Azhagan etc.

Thiruvannamalai Andar, Thiruvannamalai Mahadevar, Thiruvannamalai Alwar, Thiruvannamalai udayar,Anna nattu udayar are the names of this Deity as gleaned from epigraphs.

Unnamalai Ammai, is the name of the goddess who sheds Her grace, enshrined in a separate temple here. The inscriptions speak of her name as Unnamalai Nachiar, Thirukamakottamudiya Thambirattiar.

The Sacred Tree

The holy tree of this sthala is 'Maghizam'. This sacred tree is in the south corridor of the third enclosure.

CHAPTER 2

The legend and its significance

The presiding Deity for wisdom is Saraswati and Her husband is Brahma. Lakshmi is the presiding Deity for wealth and Vishnu is Her husband. On one occassion a

virulent! dispute rose between Vishnu and Brahma as to who was superior.

"Endowed with wisdom, I am great," was the logic of Brahma.

"No. steeped in Ocean of Wealth, I am superior", was Vishnu's argument.

Based on the ability of Knowledge and strength of wealth, both of them disputed for a very long time; still they could not arrive at a decision. In that state, both of them agreed to seek an umpire for final decision and went to Lord Siva.

Lord Siva patiently listened to the arguments of both; and decided to subject them to a crucifying test. Addressing them, He proclaimed, "I will appear in the form of a great Light. Seek thou, its crest and root. Then I will decide your case."

Hearing this, Brahma and Vishnu agreed to the test, Brahma said, "I will seek the crown", while Vishnu agreed to find the terminal.

It was then, when the form of Lord Siva assumed the shape of Fire-Light, linking the Earth and Sky.

Vishnu, taking the form of a Boar plunged towards the root, digging through the seven nether worlds, only to face failure.

But Vishnu, gracefully accepted defeat.

Brahma on the other hand, taking the form of a Swan started flying towards the Lord's crown resulting only in a strenuous struggle. At that juncture, a pandanus flower dropped from the head of Siva towards the earth.

Perceiving this, the Swan caught hold of the flower and enquired wherefrom it was falling. The flower replied that it was falling from the head of Siva.

Immensely delighted with these words, Brahma, requested the pandanus to bear witness and along with it came to Siva's presence. He boldly declared that he had brought a flower from the head of Siva as proof.

Alas! The Pandanus flower nodded its head in unison to the falsehood of Brahma.

Enraged at this insolence, Siva cursed Brahma that he will never be honoured with a temple in future, and that is the reason why we do not come across temples dedicated to Brahama.

The Pandanus flower too, had its share of punishment for its false witness. Siva banished that flower from his adornrnents, and that is why that flower is not used for worship or adorning Siva.

Philosophy: What this place means to everyone:

To be blessed with True Knowledge, there should be a complete destruction of the Ego. Supreme Truth cannot be attained so long as selfishness lingers. And Thiruvannamalai stands beautitfully illustrating this philosophic aspect.

Ego, Arrogance, Vanity and Selfishness - all these terms denote only one thing. Whose vanity will soar high? Vast learning and immense wealth stir up one's ego .Brahma by his intellect and Vishnu by his wealth grew proud and it induced them to claim superiority. And when they failed to perceive the crest and root of Lord Siva, they realised the greatness of Siva thus getting rid of their arrogance. In short they realised the Supreme Truth.

The Vanity assumed by Brahma was intellectual superiority, while that of Vishnu was a flaunting of riches.

There is another subtle moral woven into the legend of this place. While a showmanship magnificence of Wealth admits its inefficacy in the end, ego born of literary superiority does not only refuse to admit its inadequency, but also schemes to conceal the defects.

Our ancient seers hence have beautifully presented these facts to enable us to grasp its philosophic import. These have been incorporated in one of the 64 plays (lilas) of Siva. We worship this aspect as Annamaliyar. The

Canons of Silpa speak of this Annamalaiyar's aspect as Lingodbhava Murthi.

Just think about Annamalaiyar. That is enough to secure Liberation. In a way it is illustrating a supreme Truth. The ego should be entirely exterminated if one were to realise the supreme Truth, the eternal Bliss and the great Liberation. The term "to think secures liberation' indicates that one should live without forgetting this truth, 'To think', means not to forget.

Just to aid the people to remember this import is the Deepa Darsana- the festival of witnessing the Light atop the Annamalai mountain on the Kartigai day, is celebrated In the tamil month of Kartigai . The month of Kartigai almost comes to an end with this auspicious Kartigai and Margazhi succeeds.

The sky overcast with black clouds reminds one of the envẹloping ego. The light is Fire. That Fire standing as a beacon of light dispels darkness. Similarly Lord Siva stands as Fire and burns our ego.

Margazhi, the succeeding month is the dawn of the year. This month has been termed as a Month of Sunya.' What does this signify? That our minds have been cleaned of all impure egos and scintillates in its pure states. 'Sunya' means devoid of anything.

In accordance with Chandramana calculations (based on Moon's transit) Marghazi after Kartigai being a Sunya month is devoted entirely to concentrate on Divine matters. Wedding and such other mundane matters are not performed in this month. The next tamil month is 'Thai'. In past times it was only the month of Thai that was the beginning month in an year. On that day people used to rise up early, bathe, and visit the temple receive sacred ash as prasada along with Thiruvadirai Kali (a sweet pudding prepared specially for this day). The word 'Kali' also means, Happiness'. Receiving the sweet 'Kali' is indicative of future 'Kali' (happiness) throughout the year.

In this Thiruvannamalai it is only on the day of Thiruvadirai, that the effulgent Light from the Deepa after the Deepa Darsana is brought. All these things only indicate that there are immeasurable moral and religious principles in the Deepa Darsana.

CHAPTER 3

The Grandeur of This Sthala

This Annamalai is a blessed sthala shining with splendour. It will be no exaggeration to state that in this holy Tamil Nadu, it is this Annamalai sthala which stands eminent by its divine grace.

The Earth is composed of five elements. Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether are these five elements. They are also known as Prithivi, Appu, Thejo, Vayu and Akasa. Tholkappiar in his composition (1589) has categorically stated some thousand years ago that this world is composed of these five elements. The physical body of the throbbing life is also intermingled by these five elements. "Whatever is in the Universe, is also in the "body" goes the proverb.

Our ancients, having understood the essence of the five elements, have caused temples to be erected for each element. They are known as the Sacred spots of the Five Elements. They are:

Earth (land) Prithivi -Thiruvarur, Kancheepuram
Water-Appu-Thiruvanaikka (near Thiruchirapalli).
Fire - Theju - Thiruvannamalai
Air - Vayu - Thirukkalathi
Ether - Akasa - Chidambaram

Thillai Kalambakam beautifully expresses about this five sthalas of elements.

Of the sthalas of Five elements, Thiruvannamalai is the Teju Sthala: and stands foremost in bestowing grace. To be born in Thiruvarur, to die in Kasi, to see Thillai, to think

about Thiruvannamalai bestows liberation; hence this sthala naturally stands supreme. One should reach a place to see, and to die, but to think one need not move an inch. One can think from the place one is stationed. Thus it is possible to obtain salvation by remaining in ones place and think of Annamalai. Because this place bestows liberation, this has secured the names Muktipuri and Sivalogam.

This Mukti sthala-Thiruvannamalai is supreme through three aspects, Deity, Sthala, and Tirtha (holy water). Located 42 miles (67 kms) from Villupuram, this Mukti sthala spreads through an expanse of 24 acres containing the temple of Annamalaiyar with towers piercing the sky. This shrine is famous not only in South india but throughout India. Its fame is immeasurable. It is the utterance of saint Thirunavukkarasar that one's sins will be washed off by a worship here.

It was in this sthala of "Fire" that the shapeless Supreme assumed a cognisable shape. Saint Manickavachagar has put forth this idea in one of his psalms as 'I bow to the Formless and the Form.

The mountain in this place is like a medical cure for the malady of birth and death and hence is called 'Malai Maruntu' (medicine mountain), As it is in the form of Fire, it got the name Arunachalam.

Legends declare that those who pronounce the name of this sthala once, secure the bliss of repeating three crores of times the panchakshara (the Mantra of five words) and that not only those who visited and worshipped in this sthala, but also their descendents upto 21 generations will get liberation.

Brahma and Vishnu filled with joy on seeing the Lord in the form of a Mountain addressed him supplicating how can they worship if he were to remain as a huge mountain and requested Him to take the form of a Sivalingam at the foot of the hill. Lord Siva conceded to their request to become a Sivalinga and vanished within the hill. Immediately a Sivalinga appeared there.



Overwhelmed with joy, Brahma and Vishnu caused a temple to be erected through the divine sculptor Mayan. A prosperous city and three hundred holy pools sprang there. Besides, the celestial Ganga and Kalpaka became Wells and Trees. The Epics declare that Devas and Sages were born as men...

Legend also reveals that while Nandikesvara was extolling the greatness of this sthala to sage Markandeya, he explained that while all other sthalas can be deemed to be Body, this Arunachala is the Face with Lord Siva as its eyes. He also told that the fame of this sthala is unfathomable.

Those who bathe in the holy tanks like Indra Tirtham, circumambulate the hill, perform "Dhapas" (donate gifts). worship Arunachala, witness the Deepa Darsana and meditate sincerely will be blessed with vast wealth and attain liberation.

Uniqueness of the place

As the Vedas have declared "'Though formless, being without beginning or end', the Lord of effulgence will present himself in a Form," Thiruvannamalai is the unique holy spot where He has shown himself in the form of a Linga. The primary Lord from his shapeless mass of Mountain has assumed the shape of a Linga in the temple for all to view. This sacred temple is a Light beacon for all to steer through the sea of birth and reach the shores of Mukti (Liberation).

As one enters the town Annamalai, the Rajagopura, standing majestically, soaring 217 feet (65m) comes to view first. This tower is a standing testimony to the artistic genius of the Vijayanagara Dynasty.

Inside the temple in the south west corner of the thousand pillared hall is the Patala (underground) Linga, worshipped by the inimitable Ramana Maharishi. This is the place where Ramana Maharishi did penance and absorbed in the bliss of meditation secured liberation.

The *Kambath Ilayanar Sannadhi* in the temple is a famous one. Adorned with 16 pillars, this spot was the

hallowed place where Arunagiri Swami, the author of Thiruppugazh, was granted Mukti by the Lord. God Muruga bestowed grace on this devotee under the sixteen pillars after accepting the devotion by the token Tamil *Tiruppugazh.*

The Ilayanar sannadhi near the Gopura is the place where Arunagirinadha disgusted with life, fell from the Vallala Maharajah tower; Lord Muruga saved him by receiving him in his hands. Muruga further blessed him in this sannadhi by appearing with his spouses Valli and Devasena.

The *Kiligopura* in this temple has an interesting background. Proud Deva Raya wanted a Parijata flower from Paradise, and Arunagirinadha after shaking of this physical body, assumed the form of a parrot for that purpose. Sambandan, his foe, viciously circulated that Arunagirinadha has expired on which all cremated his physical body. After the lapse of some time, Arunagirinadhar returned only to find that his body has been burnt and he had to live as a parrot in the Kili Gopura, while he sang the charming Kandar Anubhudi. That is why that tower was called Kili Gopuram. In a niche in that tower can be seen a mortar image of a parrot.

It is not an empty boast to tell that the shrine of Annammalaiyar is a forest of *Gopurams.* Nine tall *Gopuras* and nine *vimanas* adorn the temple. Of these the Thirumanjana gopuram is 157 ft high; Ammani ammal tower soars 171 ft and the Peiy Gopuram extends 144 ft. Comprising 6 enclosures, we eross each through miniature towers of 70 ft high.

The temple is rich in *Mandapams* too. Of these the Jnanapal mandapam, Tirthavari Mandapam Thirvarul Vilasa mandapam, Madha Pirappu mandapam, Rudraksha mandapam, Nandi mandapam, Amavasai mandapam, Panneer mandapam. and Katchi mandapam are noteworthy.

Thiru Kalayana mandapam is a poem in stone, its wooden canopy being roofed with copper tiles, embellished with exquisite murals and artistic pillars. It was built in 1903 by Nattukottai Nagarathars, and stands as a silent witness to the grandeur of Nagarathar's handiwork. In short it is a museum of Art.

Opposite the Kiligopura stands the sixteen pillared pavillion. In the month of Karthigai when the great Fire is lighted atop the hill, the Panchamurthis (Five deities) assemble here. At the time when the Lamp in front of the Bali peeta is lighted, the huge beacon fire of light burning at the crest of the hill, with lakhs of devotees chanting in unison '*Annamalaiku Arohara*,' what an entrancing sight it offers.

Another important ritual that is celebrated in the temple is the Bharani Deepa at 5 A.M. on the 10th day of the Karthigai festival and the Mountain Deepa Darsana at 6 pm.

In the third enclosure, one can see the subshrines of Sokalathiswarar, Ekambaresvarar, Chidambaresvarar, and Jambukesvarar. The unique feature here is that those who cannot visit the Panchabudha sthalas located elsewhere can have a darshana of them here itself.

Near the sanctum, one can see rings hanging from the mouth of an Yali (a lion like mythical animal) like entwined chain. This object draws our mind to the various mental attributes of man -- affection possession, passion, Illusion, and desire. It seems to proclaim "Ye, worldly people immersed in mundane affairs, make haste to glimpse the Lord who severs these links!

Proceeding along the outer enclosure, worshipping the 63 *Nayanmars*, we reach the sanctum of Vishnu, who was responsible for the Annamalaiyar temple. Vishnu is enshrined here with the name of Venugopala.

The shrine of Chitragupta, the scribe of Dharma Devata who registers all our acts, is located next to the Navagrahas in the Amman Temple (Shrine of the goddess).

The stone pillars that support the *Mahamantapa* of the Devi shrine are of extraordinary beauty. The 16 pillars of this mandapa are a treasure house of Art, revealing the intricacies of the Silpa Canons.

Within the sanctum, the goddess reveals Herself in a young maiden form. This illustrates a mystery. In her right hand is the lotus flower; the left hand hangs limply expressive of the humility of a charming girl. The pose expresses that one can live in this world happily bereft of sorrow if only they live like a fragile flower clothed in humility. In the enclosure of the Devi shrine, the psalms poured forth by Jnanasambanda, Navukarasar, Arunagirinadar and Manickavachakar about this sthala are written on the walls.

The inscriptions of the walls in the third enclosure display the *Meykirtis* of the Cholas, Pandyas, Pallavas, Hoysalar, and Vijayanagara rulers. We learn from the epigraphs that Kopperunjinga donated Thiruvasi, the holy feet of Nataraja, a gold throne and gold ornaments.

From another inscription we learn that during the Vijayanagara rule and especially during Krishna Deva Raya's period, the thousand pillared hall, the holy tank of Vasanthothsava, the gopura of 11 tiers, a car for Vinayaka, Indra Vimana and such 20 great gifts were made.

From the time of the historic Cholas through Vallala Maharaja, Krishna Deva Raya, Tanjore Nayaks, and of late from patrons like Nattukottai Nagarattar, this Annamaliar temple grew gradually in artistic splendour.

It is considered to be the world's centre Point.

Ani Annamalai also called Adi Annamalai is the ancient temple and is on the route of circumambulating the hill. Nearby stands a separate shrine for Manickavachaka.

Encircling the hills are 360 sacred pools, and in the eight cardinal directions are the *Ashtalingas* and *Ashta Nandis*.

Annamalai sthala has a special place in the history of our Tamil Culture and Religious life. Manickavachaka has

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praised this sthala in no mean words, and Thiruvembavai, the divine composition, owes its blossoming to this place.

And it was in this sthala that saints Thirunavukkarasar and Gnanasambandar sang their *Thevaram* hymns.

This is the sthala where Muruga blessed saint Arunagiri with his grace. It was Muruga who initiated Arunagiri to compose and even provided him with the first line. It was at Thiruvannamalai that Arunagiri lived, and on 15th August, every year, a festival is conducted here for him. The Thiruppugazh is a devotional composition paving the way for salvation by inducing the devotees to become spiritual. The song commencing with the words 'Muthai Tharu,' in Thiruppugazh was provided by Lord Muruga in this sthala.

Kanda Puranam, Thiruvilaiadal Puranam etc. give us glimpses of the shrines of Muruga and the pilgrim route of Agastiar, mentioning Thiruvannamalai as an important place.

Villiputturar, while describing the pilgrimage of Arjuna expresses that Arjuna worshipped Arunachalam which is held in veneration by learned men.

Several devotional literatures like Arunachala Purana, Thiru Arunai Kalambakam, Thiruvannamalai Andhadhi, Sonachala malai, Annamalai Sadhakam, Karthigai Deepa Venba, Unnamulaiamman Sadhakam, Arunachala Sadhakam, Arunachala Akshara malai, Annamalaiyar Vannam, Thiruvannamalai Padigangal etc. speak of the greatness of Annamalai, These are all famous literature connected with this sthala.

Thiru Arut Prakasa Vallalar Ramalinga Swamigal has sung about this effulgent Thiruvanmalai.

Though this town is known by the name 'Thiruvannamalai' strictly speaking it is not correct, as it is only the name of the hill. This hill Annamalai has been responsible for the blossoming of several saints and gnanis. Many Saints have attained liberation here.

Annamalai shines as a unique sthala in Tamil Nadu. Many are those who have achieved fame, attained eminence, and attained salvation.

Annamalai Appan, and Unnamalai amman adorned only with the excellence of devotion of his devotees are enshrined here. One of the noteworthy men here was Isanya Jnana Desigar who founded the Isanya Mutt.

The Thiruvannamalai Adeenam at Kunnakudi was established by a great seer, Deivasigamani Desigar about 500 years ago. Sivapragasar a man of versatile imagination, Vanna Sarabham Thandapani Swamigal and such great men lived here.

In the last century, Ramana Maharishi, the gift of Annamalai, who spread the fragrance of his wisdom and had disciples in all parts of the world, lived here.

This sthala has' already attained fame by the presence of Seshadri swamigal who came here some time before Ramana Maharishi. The samadhi of Seshadri swamigal, the Ashramam of Ramana, and Isanya Mutt are all located here. The cave of Patala Linga, where Ramana Maharishi secured bliss is within the temple.

Annamalai, the Great

Thiruvannamalai, is a sthala without beginning or end, shines with its own effulgence, that burns the ego afflicting human beings. The temple is big, the towers big, the tank big, the philosophic import big, the vehicles big, the deities big, the walls big, the corridors' big; in short, everything about this temple is Big.

CHAPTER 4

The Mountain's grandeur

The mountain in this Annamalai sthala is full of unequalled greatness. In Krita Yuga, the Lord stood in the form of Fire, hence it became the Fire mountain. In Tretha Yuga, it was a mountain of precious gems (Ratna). In Dvapara Yuga it stood in the form of Bronze and now in

Kaliyuga it has become a stone hill. This is the substance of Arunachala Purana.

It is said that while Kailas is a place where Lord Siva resides, this mountain is Siva himself.

It is customary to install Nandi in front of Lord Siva. The images of Nandi are found around the hill innumerably. One can see them, while giong round the hill.

In the eight cardinal directions, eight Lingas are enshrined in stone edifices, and there is a sacred pool by the side of each. They are named Agni Linga, Yama Linga, Niruti Linga, Vayu Linga, Varuna Linga and Kubera Linga, respectively. Daily worship is conducted for some, but many are devoid of any worship. Some of them do have a. Vimana, Antarala and a Sanctum.

Circumambulation

One should bathe, smear the sacred ash, foot bare, lips muttering the sacred hymns of this sthala meditating on Annamaliyar--this is the ritual for making a circuit of the hill.

When one circumambulates the hill of the Lord who was the Prime cause of a dispute between Brahma and Vishnu who were unable to fathom the beginning or end of Him, it should be borne in mind that Devas and Saints also follow us invisibly. Naturally one should have a pure mind and start the circuit from the East.

While thus coming round we see the Indra Lingam at first. *Nearby is Indra Tirtha.*

Next is Agni Lingam with Agni Tirtham closely. Nearby is the Samadhi of Seshadri Swamigal.

Adjacent to this are the Ramana ashram, the places where he sat for penance, the seats he occupied while meditating, are all there.

In the same west street, is the temple of Saint Manickavachaka, whose hymns of Thiruvembavai and Thiruvemmanai drip like honeyed nectar into our ears.

Sadasiva Murthi with five faces is enshrined in the north street abutting the hill. Proceeding further we come across

Isanya Mutt and Isanya sacred pool. The first seat of Deivasigamani Desika Paramacharya Swamigal, places connected with Guhai Namasivayar, and Guru Namasivayar, Pavazhagiri Nadha and Muttambikai are housed under the slope of the hill.

All round the hill are eight Lingas, eight Nandis, more than 360 holy tanks, many mandapas and Ashrams.

The Mountain rises up with an elevation of 2665 ft. (800M). The road encircling the hill where devotees circumambulate is $8\frac{1}{4}$ miles (13 kms) long.

Anga Pradakshna:

The custom of circling the hills by the unique way of rolling with the entire body has been in vogue for a very long time. This way of circumambulation with the entire body is called Anga Pradakshna. People who observe this ritual will roll a Coconut and stand where it has stopped, bow to the hill and continue with their circumbulation.

The firm belief is that barren couples will be blessed with offspring if they go around the hill with devotion in their heart. And it is deemed to be specially sacred to go round the mountain in the month Ippasi, Karthigai, and Margazhi. It is certain that such devotees will be blessed with divine grace. In the other parts of the year, the first day of Chitrai, on the Sivaratri day in the month of Masi, on the monthly Kartigai days, on Full Moon Days, it is equally holy to go around the hill.

Legends declare that those who make a circuit of this hill on Sundays after a holy bath and making gifts will attain liberation. It is customary to poetically describe it as securing Sivahood after piercing through the Sun's Cosmos.

Similarly a circuit on Mondays with wet clothes will Secure the state of Siva after reigning over the seven worlds like Devendra.

Tuesday circuits confer freedom from poverty and the cause of births and deaths that follow eternally like a Chain.

Circling the hill on Wednesdays will make scholars proficient in four Vedas, six Sastras and sixty four Arts. They are propelled towards Mukti - liberation.

Thursdays are equally effective in elevating one to a status equal to Devas and praised by sages. Fridays elevate one to the Vishnu Padha. i.e. grace of Vishnu.

Those who go round in the dawn on Saturday will secure the grace of Navagrahas.

The first day of Chitrai, the three months commencing from *Iyappasi* confers special boons on those who circumambulate.

As Devas and sages also circumambulate this hill in invisible form, mortals should avoid carriages, blankets, umbrella, sandal, betel etc. while going round. Their heart should be entirely filled only with thoughts of Arunachaleswara. While coming round, any noise sounded in Palani Andavar Sannadhi will echo.

Even lame devotees undergo this penance. The Arunachala Purana describes that when a lame devotee was circumambulating with the aid of wooden strut, Lord Siva appeared before him and blessed him with legs.

On the way round, near the Chengam route on the left is the Vaira Kunnu. Here stones suitable for making images are found. The work relating to Vallauvar Kottam at Madras was carried on only here.

Milestones have been fixed all along the route around the hill. They are all 700 years old, and they carry inscriptions of 13 th century AD. in Tamil. They have great historical importance.

CHAPTER 5

The Mountain that bestows Jnana

Thiruvannamalai, the sthala of fire (Theyu) is not the name of the town. It is the name of the mountain. It is a hill of Jnana (Supreme Knowledge). It is the hill where the Lord bestows His grace. It is the symbol of Arut Perum Jothi (The light of supreme Wisdom)

Manickavachaka, the saint has praised this Thiruvannamalai, where virgin girls bathe in the early morning and sing hymns praising the Lord, as the supreme Light that has no beginning or end.

Supreme Light is the grace of the lord that is derived from knowledge borne of supreme wisdom. The grace for liberation springs only in hearts where the 'Ego' and 'the I' have vanished. Till then it will be out of reach. Thiruvannamalai is the place where Lord Siva himself reveals in the form of effulgent Light to those who are free from the ego.

From the legends we learn that Brahma and Vishnu unable to fathom the beginning and end of the Lord, came to the Lord himself and confessed their defeat. The subtle meaning is that neither Science nor Intellect will be of any use. It also indicates that there is a Truth higher than these two. Realising their ignorance, they come to know of the Supreme Wisdom . One cannot grasp the essence of the Supreme Lord through intellect born of desire and illusion. The Truth of grace is within and realising that only is True Gnana.

Annamalai is the symbol of that Light and its greatness is unfathomable. But those immersed in ignorance will see it only as a mountain; those who are steeped in Bliss will perceive it as the supreme Light of Truth.

The bounden duty of all devotees is to witness the grandest sight of Uma Maheswara with His five deities assembled in the courtyard of the temple every year on the great Kartigai and the Beacon of Light being lighted atop the mountain.

Gnanapillaiar of Sirkazhi (Sambandar) has poured forth in a hymn, praising this hill. He calls Annamalai a heap of Wisdom. This also singnifies the mountain.

One of the subtle facts is that the Lord who revealed gnana by posing as a pillar of light, also bestows grace to mortals by his Lilas. Who are the devotees? Only those who have lost themselves in the Ocean of devotion and seek

enlightenment. Their true devotion is the basis for Supreme Knowledge.

To remove the ego, one should read religious books of high order and worship the Supreme tirelessly. Whenever they come across devotees of Siva, they should render service to them with humility.

True knowledge alone is real. Other things are mere illusions appearing like Reality. The very sight of this mountain dispels ego. It reveals the form of the Lord. It reveals the meaning of the Truth. Worship of this hill is a step to seek His grace.

Five hundred years ago, in a sect honoured with the privilege of performing ablutions by touching the Deity, was born a son named Deivasigamani. Always immersed in meditating upon the lotus feet of Annamalaiar, he became a fountain head of Wisdom. Many are the souls who got inspiration from this mountain of Jnana. Even those who saw him were blessed with Wisdom. To hear him was to receive grace. To those who were intimate with him, were showered with Bliss. Vallala was a King who worshipped this saint. The art of reviving the dead, sung by Ramalinga, the 19th Century saint, was a natural attribute of this saint. He raised the dead horse of Vallala back to life. The wall of the south corridor proclaims his glory.

Even to-day, the sanctum enshrining this saint's image is a spring of Knowlege. Those who come to this sacred town intending to meditate seek only this place first.

Thus Thiruvannamalai is the stem for blossoming of several saint's souls. This bestows Jnana. It is a compulsion for divotees to circumambulate this mountain.

CHAPTER 6

The Structure of the Shrine

Saint Sivaprakasa Swamigal in his *Thiruvengai ula* has called this temple a poem wrought by seers. Our ancients have sung shrines in beautiful terms and in accordance with *Silpa* Canons.

Of the great temples of Tamil Nadu, Annamaliar temple is one. It is spread over an extent of 24 acres.

Like all other temples, this Annamaliar temple too has a Sanctum, Muha mandapa, Corridors, and walls of enclosure.

This temple further has sports pavillions, several circumambulatory passages, subsidiary shrines, Thousand pillared mandapam, Hundred pillared mandapam, Sacred tanks, Gopuras, etc.

As renovations occured during several periods, the old structure has been changed a little. Yet, the Sanctum retains the old pattern. It must have been a granite structure in old periods. This is corroborated by inscriptions. The 'Kodungai' or the roof edge is formed of Yali friezes and the Vimana is of mortar.

There are six enclosures in this temple:

The number of Gopurams are 9 in all. Of these, four are in the midst of the walls.

Raja gopuram is the name, by which the big tower in the east is called. It has 11 tiers, with a width of 135 ft by 98 ft at the base. The Tanjore Big temple erected by the Chola monarch Raja Raja Chola soars 216 ft high. Just to compare and rival that height, one more foot has been added to the elevation of this temple making it 217 ft. And this tower provides the main entrance to the temple.

Ammani ammal gopuram, Thirumanjana gopuram and Pey Gopuram are the names of the north, south and west towers respectively.

As its name erroneously indicates. there is neither pey(ghost) nor devil in it. In olden times, Tamil scholars with literary aspirations have named this tower as mel gopuram (western tower). But as years passed, this name got corrupted into pey gopuram!

The first and second enclosures with their enclosing walls are the oldest. The third enclosure was erected by Kulottunga as evidenced by the epigraphs in Kili gopuram.

The fourth enclosure, the wall abutting it, the fifth enclosure, the thousand pillared hall the Big Nandi, the Sivaganga Tank, the wall enclosing huge structures and the tower, all belong to the 16th century.

The outer Enclosure;

The outermost corridor called the outer enclosure has a granite wall. It is not only very high, wide and strong but also links the entrance gopurams.

The massive wall is about 30 ft high. At some places in this wall, portrait images of Kings are seen. The inscriptions found in this wall are disjointed and broken.

The Thousand Pillard Hall

On entering the temple through the East tower the big structure one faces in the right is the Thousand pillared Hall. There are indications that it was built by Krishna Deva Raya.

This Thousand Pillared Hall sports exactly 1000 pillars. The pillars are curved, with sculptures of Naik periods and some divine images. Sages, Vishnu's incarnations too find a place with floral designs.

The basement of this mandapa is adorned with the designs of girls playing Kolattam, warriors' sports etc.

This Mandapam is used for the Deities to be seated for ablutions and worship on Ani Thirumanjanam, and day of Thiruvathirai.

Kambathu Ilayanar

The sannadhi of Kambatthu Ilayanar is located opposite the Thousand Pillared Hall closely connected with the life of Arunagirinadar. This mandapa exhibits the image of Muruga in a pillar in the north.

Puranas proclaim that Muruga gave dars̄han to Prouda Deva Raja in response to a song of Arunagiri nadtha.

The Tank - Sivaganga:

The sacred pool, Sivaganga, is to the south of the Kambathu Ilayanar mandapam with enclosed corridor. This

tank is used for sacred ablutions to the Deities in the temple. The tank, with steps all round present a panoranic view.

Inscriptions reveal that water to this tank was provided by digging a canal called Thirumalai amman Devi Samudram.

The shrine of Sarvasiddhi Vinayagar

This shrine is in the northern bank of the tank. Sivagangai Vinayagar is another name by which this Vinayagar is known. He is in a seated posture.

The Mandapa encircling the sanctum are filled with various images of the later Naik periods in the roof.

The Big Nandi

Passing across the Sivaganga Tank, and Vinayaga shrine, we accost the beautiful Mandapa with a big Nandi, the Bull 6 ft long which was erected by Vallala Maharaja.

Ilayanar Koil of the Gopura

The Gopura Ilayanar Koil is opposite the Nandi mandapa. It is built in the outer courtyard of the north enclosure.

It is in this place that Lord Muruga gave darshan and blessed the poet Arunagiri. In the sannadhi is God Muruga with his two spouses. There is also a copper image of Arunagiri here. The Mandapa too is near by and this fact has been expressed by Arunagiri in one of his songs.

The Sannadhi of Kalyana Sundarar

To the south of the Gopura is situated the shrine of Kalyana Sundarar. In this shrine are the Linga, the Devi and the Nandi. In front of the sanctum is a marriage mandapam linked and in this mandapa devotees perform marriages.

Kala Bairava

The Kala Bairava shrine is located in the north enclosure attached to the south wall of the tower of Vallala Maharajah. The Kala Bairava presents a terrific appearance in a standing pose with a halo round his head.

Possessed of eight arms, armed with Udukkai, Kapala, Sword, Shield. Parrot, Bell and Sula spreading his legs He stands. A halo of lamps encircle his head, and tongues of Fire shoot out from that halo. Protruding teeth, anklets, and third eye complete His appearance.

Brahma Tirtha

This sacred pool with beautiful steps is in front of the Bairavar temple. In this tank too, the sacred ablutions of the Deities are performed.

Puravi Mandapam

The roof of this mandapa exhibit paintings of the Naik period. Most of the murals are in black pigment. The scene of churning the milk ocean are painted in series.

Thirai Konda Vinayagar

Yanai Thirai Konda Vinayaga temple is in the south of the steps of Kili gopura. This Vinayaga shrine has been exquisitely wrought. This God, Vinayaga threatened a King with evil propensities, in dream. The King naturally frightened paid a ransom of several elephants. Hence this Vinayaga came to be known as Yanai Thirai Konda Vinayagar (the Vinayaga who got ransom of elephants).

This shrine is to the right of Kili gopura and to the left is Pichai Ilayanar Sannadhi.

Subsidiary shrines

Next to the Puravi Mandapa is a small Nandi. To the south are Brahmalingam (Mukalinga), Vidyadareswarar, Vinayagar, Naleswarer respectively.

In the shrine of Naleswarar, images of Durgai in exquisite form are in ghosta.

Third Enclosure

On passing through the Kiligopura one accosts the Katchi mandapa first. This mandapa has 16 pillars. It is from this Mandapa, that the Pancha Murthis (five deities) give darshan on the day of Kartigai. Ardanariswarar too gives darshan from this place. Exactly in front are Bali Peeta, Nandi, and Flag-staff. This is the third enclosure.

To the south of this Prakara is the place where food is pepared for the Lord. In the north mandapa is the Office for administering temple affairs. To the east and west of this mandapa i.e. at the north end of the Kiligopura are Chidambaresvarar. Jambukesvarer, Ekambaresvarer, and Pidari shrines.

Pidari

The images of the Sapta mathas chiselled in separate stones, are in the shrine which faces north. Inside, Nidambasudani gives darshan with 8 arms.

In a stone here only the head of Renuka Devi is seen. It is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. high. (75cms). It is a beautiful image. The nose is slightly damaged.

In the administrative office, the room for *Yagasalai* and the sanctum of Kalathiswara to the right are located. The Sacred Bull in the Sannadthi of Kalathiswara is very long and have short horns.

To the south-west in this Prakara is the Thiru Kalyana mandapam (marriage Hall). Formed in Vijayanagara art, the pillars have been smoothly polished in subsequent times. This Mandapa is of exquisite beauty. Within this Mandapa is the Bhimeswar Linga and a dais in front. Several paintings of charm adorn this mandapa.

Patala Linga

Ramana Maharishi stayed in this cave for several years and did penance. Gifted by Tarapore, it was opened by Rajaji.

Sambanda Vinayagar

Sambanda Vinayagar's shrine is located to the north of the Flag staff and Bali peeta. To the south is Palani Andavar.

Sambanda Vinayaga looks crimson smeared with saffron. Of huge size he is in a sitting pose. It is related that this Vinayaga killed an Asura and smeared the body with his blood.

And inscription Saka 1262 (1340 A.D) of the reign of Vira Ballala Diva is found here. From this epigraph we learn that one Sambundandar lived in Thiruvannamalai. He was very influential in the temple of Annamalaiyar. He was also the head of a Mutt. Because this sanndthi was erected by him, it got the name Sambanda Vinayagar.

Second Enclosrue

While circumambulating this prakara on a raised platform can be seen Sanakesvarer, Sanantesvarar, Sanatanesvarar, Sanatkumarar, Kowsikesvarar, Kutcharisvarar, Valmikiswarar, Vamarishisvarar, Agnilinga, Vignesvarar, Visvanadar, Naradesvarar, Kasilingam, Vaisambadanesvarar and sixty three Nayanmars like Sundarar etc. Thumbureswarar also is here.

Adjoining it are sapta Mathas chiselled in stone. Goutamar (2 ft) and Durvasa (4 ft) are here in a standing pose.

In the West row, are the festival idols of Somaskanda, Venugopala sannadthi and sanctum of Arumuga. To the left are several Lingas. In the north now are the Bhiksadanar, Shanmugar, festival idols of 63 Nayanmars etc.

Kalasankara

The image of Kalasankara 3 ft high armed with Mazhu, Pasa, Sula and Kapala is in the act of killing Yama. This is a very beautiful image.

Bairava

The image of Bhairava of 3 1/2 high (105 cms) is armed with Udukkai, Pasa, Sula and Kapala. The image of Dog is nearby. The fire halo and a necklace are his ornaments.

Sthala Vinayaga

The sanctum of this Vinayaga is in the S.W. corner of the southern end in the west of the second prakara. This was erected by Sembiam Ma Devi wife of Kandaraditya Chola.

First Prakara

Glass Lights, pendant Lamps and Kuthu Villakku adorn the first and second prakara.

Dakshinamurthi

Dakshinamurthi is enshrined in the ghosta of the sanctum in the first Prakara. This deity is decked with Snake, Fire, Rosary and Book and is in a seated pose. Beneath him are the Muyalakan and the four Sages.

Lingodbavar

Lingodbava is seen with Vishnu in the form of a Boar digging the earth and Brahma as a Swan. Usually the Swan will be seen only in a flying pose. But here, peculiarly it is found seated on His head.

Brahma.

Brahma with rosary, Kamandala in two hands and bestowing Abaya by the other hand is seen standing.

Durga

Durga Devi is standing on the head of a buffalo, Abaya and Katyavilambita are the poses featured by Her hands.

Chandikesvarar

As is found in all other temples Chandikesvara is present in a separate shrine.

Friezes of Buta (Ganas)

The *Ganas* found in the Vimana are seen some supporting the structure, some playing the flute, some drumming, some dancing, some clapping etc.

Dvarapalakas

The two Dvarapalakas in the first Prakara is 10 ft high (3 M). He is adorned with Jata Makuda, Mazhu, Danda, and displays Tharjani, mudra, leaning on the Danda, The Dvarapalaka on the left has a snake.

The Dvarapalakas in the Sanctum has only 2 hands. Holding a snake in his hand, he has a Gadtha and exhibits Tarjani mudra.

Sanctum.

The sactum of the sacred Annamalaiyar is reached by the main entrance in the east.

Within the sanctum Annamalaiyar, personified, is present in Linga form.

While the Avudiyar is round, the Rudra baga is covered with gold plate.

None but the initiated Sivachariars could touch the Linga. Nearby is the Meru chakra - the Bed room idol and a bronze idol of Yoga Sakti Amman.

Unnamulai Amman

The Devi Shrine is a separate structure, Opposite this shrine is a big mandapa. Besides these are the Flag staff Nandi and Navagrahas. The Dvarapalakas are armed with Gadtha, exhibit Tarjani mudra and has a Crown.

The entire Devi shrine has been renovated last century by Nagarattars and display later day architecture. In the prakara around this sanctum the festival idols are kept; in the west Lingodbava, Processional idol of Vinayaga Somalinga, Cheralingam, Brahmi, and Durga are housed.

All round the sanctum and in Antarala are five Sakti Ammans in ghostas, Each image is 1 1/2 ft tall.

In the sanctum is enshrined Unnamulai Amman, 3 ft (90cms) tall, radiating peace. The Mandapa outside the sanctum has beautiful pillars worked with exquisite art. Because of Ashta-Lakshmis here, the Mandapa is known as the Ashta Laxmi Mandapam.

CHAPTER 7

Names of Images

In the Annamalaiyar temple are several mandapas like Jnanapal mandapa, Tirthavari mandapa, Thiru Arul Vilasa mandapa, several gopurams like Raja Gopuram, Kili Gopura etc; five Prakaras and several subsidary shrines like Pidari Coil, Kambathu Ilayanar Coil, and some sacred pools like Sivaganga Tirtha, Brahma Tirtha etc. In these are enshrined several Images. They can be classified thus:

1. Raja Gopuram
1. Gopura Ganapathi
2. Viral Minda Nayanar

2. Kambathu Ilayanar Coil
1. Dvarapalakas
2. Kambathu Ilayanar (Mulavar)
3. Ganapathi
4. Surasamhara murthi

3. Sarva Siddi Vinayagar Coil
1. Sarva Siddi Vinayagar
2. Mooshikam
3. Dandayudapani
4. Nagar
5. Big Nandi
6. Bali peeta

4. Patala Lingesvarar
1. Patala Lingesvarar
2. Nandi

5. Gopura Ilayanar Sannadhi
1. Vinayagar
2. Gopura Ilayanar
3. Valli
4. Devayani
5. Subramania
6. Arunagirinada
7. Peacock.

6. Kalyanasundaresuvarar Sannadhi
1. Vinayagar
2. Kalayanasundaresvarar
3. Nandi
4. Ucchi pilliar
5. Vanni Tree Vinayagar

7. Bank of Brahma Tirtha
1. Kala Bairavar
2. Vidyadaresvarar

3. Ganapathi
4. Nalesvarar
5. Brahma Lingam
6. Bali peeta
7. Yanai Thirai Konda Vinayagar

8. Small Nandi

8. Kili Gopura (North)
1. Subramaniar
2. Bairavar
3. Pichai Ilayanar
4. Valli
5. Deivayani
6. Bali peeta

9. Third Prakara

1. Pani Ponn Pottu Kottum Vinayagar.
2. Dakshinamurthi under the Magizha tree
3. Vinayagar under the Magizha tree
4. Jalakantesvarar under the Magizha tree
5. Nandi under the Magizha tree

10. Thirukkalyana Mandapam

1. Vinayagar
2. Bhimesvarar

11. Third Prakara (West side)

1. Vinayagar
2. Arunagiri Yogisvarar

12. Third Enclosure (North Side)

1. Kalathisvarar
2. Big Nandi
3. Small Nandi

13. Pidari Temple

1. Vinayagar
2. Renuka Devi
3. Puja of Kannappar
4. Brahami
5. Maheswari

6. Kowmari
7. Vaishnavi
8. Varahi
9. Indrani
10. Chamundi
11. Ashtabuja Pidari
12. Sastha
13. Bali Peeta

14. Chidambareswarar Temple

1. Chidambareswarar

15. Jambukeswarar Temple

1. Jambukeswarar
2. Nandi

16. Ekambareswarar Temple

1.Ekambareswarar

17. Sambanda Vinayagar Sannadhi

1. Sambanda Vinayagar
2. Mooshikam

18. Flag Staff Mandapa

1. Front Bali Peeta
2. Nandi
3. Undi Vinayagar
4. Subramaniar
5. Valli
6. Deivayanai

19. Dhandapani Temple

1. Dhandapani

20. Second Enclosure

1. Adhikara Nandi
2. Indra Lingam
3. Sanakesvarar
4. Sanantaneswarar
5. Sanatanesvarar
6. Sanatkumaresvarar
7. Thirunavukarasu swamigal

8. Sundaramurthi Swamigal
9. Thirujnana Sambanda Swamigal
10. Manickvachaka Swamigal
11. Kowsikesvarar
12. Kuthsarishi Esvarar
13. Valmickisvarar
14. Agni Lingam
15. Vignesvarar
16. Visvanadesvarar
17. Naradesvarar
18. Kasi Lingam
19. Nandi
20. Vaisambayanesvarar
21. Vamarishisvarar

Row of Arupathu Muvar

1. Sundaramurthi swamigal
2. Thillai Vazh Andanar
3. Thiruneelakanta Nayanar
4. Eiyarpagai Nayanar
5. Ilayangudi Mara Nayanar
6. Meyporul Nayanar
7. Viral Meenda Nayanar
8. Amarneedhi Nayanar
9. Eripatha Nayanar
10. Enadhi Nayanar
11. Kannappa Nayanar
12. Kungilya Kalaya Nayanar
13. Manickanchara Nayanar
14. Arivattaya Nayanar
15. Anaya Nayanar
16. Murthi Nayanar
17. Muruga Nayanar
18. Rudra Pasupathi Nayanar
19. Thirunalayaippovar Nayanar
20. Thirukkurippu Thonda Nayanar
21. Chandesvara Nayanar
22. Thirunavukkarasu Nayanar

23. Kulachchirai Nayanar
24. Perumizhalai Nayanar
25. Karaikkal Ammayar
26. Apputhi Adigal Nayanar
27. Thiruneel Nakka Nayanar
28. Nami Nandi Adigal Nayanar
29. Thirujnana Sambanda Swamigal
30. Aeyar Kon Kalik Kama Nayanar
31. Thirumula Nayanar
32. Thandi Adigal Nayanar
33. Murga Nayanar
34. Somasi Mara Nayanar
35. Chakkia Nayanar
36. Chirapuli Nayanar
37. Siruthonda Nayanar
38. Cheraman Perumal Nayanar
39. Gananadha Nayanar
40. Kurruva Nayanar
41. Poyydimai Illadha Pulavar Nayanar
42. Pugazh Chola Nayanar
43. Narasinga Munaya Nayanar
44. Athipaththa Nayanar
45. Kalikamba Nayanar
46. Kaliya Nayanar
47. Saththi Nayanar
48. Iyadigal Kadavar Kon Nayanar
49. Kanam Pulla Nayanar
50. Kavi Nayanar
51. Ninra Chir Nedumara Nayanar
52. Vayilar Nayanar
53. Manai Aduvar Nayanar
54. Kazharchinga Nayanar
55. Idankazhi Nayanar
56. Cheruthunai Nayanar
57. Pugazhthunai Nayanar
58. Kotputi Nayanar
59. Nesa Nayanar

60. Ko-Chengat Chozha Nayanar
61. Thiruneelakanta Yazparna Nayanar
62. Sadaya Nayanar
63. Poosalar Nayanar.

Other images

1. Paththarai Panivar
2. Paramanayich Paduvar
3. Chithathai Sivam Paley Vaithar
4. Thiruvaroor Pirandar
5. Muppozhuthun Thirumerri Theenduvar
6. Muzhu Neeru Poosia Munivar
7. Appalum adi sardandar
8. Mangayarkarasiyar
9. Isai Jnaniar
10. Sekkilar
11. Yama Lingam
12. Kasi Lingam
13. Kasi Lingam
14. Kasi Lingam
15. Kasi Lingam
16. Thumburesvarar
17. Ganapathi
18. Brahmai
19. Mahesvari
20. Kowmari
21. Vaishnavi
22. Varahi
23. Indrani
24. Chamundi
25. Shasta
26. Goutamar
27. Durvasar
28. Sthala Vinayagar
29. Vinayagar
30. Nrita Lingam
31. Vinayagar.

Second Prakara (West)

1. Venugopala Swamy
2. Radha
3. Rukmani
4. Anjeneyar
5. Garudalvar

Festival idol of Somaskandar

1. Dvarapalakas (2)
2. Varuna Lingam
3. Nandi
4. Vyasa Lingam
5. Ambigai
6. Vikra Pandisvarar
7. Vanitta Lingam
8. Nandi
9. Laxmi
10. Shanmugar
11. Valli
12. Devayanai
13. Sahasra Lingam
14. Satha Lingam
15. Sri Devi
16. Jesta Devi
17. Vayu Lingam
18. Annapurani
19. Kubera Lingam

22. West Side of Bed - Chamber (Palli Arai)

1. Visvamitresvarar
2. Patanjalisvarar
3. Vyagrapadesvarar
4. 108 Lingam
5. Agathisvarar
6. Jvarakaresvarar
7. Kalasankarar
8. Bairavar
9. Bairavar (separate shrine)
10. Isana Lingam

18. Annapurani
19. Kubera Lingam

22. West Side of Bed - Chamber (Palli Arai)

1. Visvamitresvarar
2. Patanjalisvarar
3. Vyagrapadesvarar
4. 108 Lingam
5. Agathisvarar
6. Jvarakaresvarar
7. Kalasankarar
8. Bairavar
9. Bairavar (separate shrine)
10. Isana Lingam

23. First Prakara

1. Ratha Lamp Nandi
2. Ratha Lamp Bali Peeta
3. Dvarapalakas
4. Ganapathi in ghostas
5. Dakshinamurthi in ghostas
6. Lingodbava in ghostas
7. Brahma
8. Durga
9. Bali peetas in 8 directions (8)
10. Chandikesvarar

24. Maha Mandapa

1. Pradosh Nandi
2. Bali Peetah
3. Dvarapalakas (2)
4. Sun
5. Sun

25. Sanctum

1. Annamalayar (Main Deity)

26. Devi Shrine Flag staff mandapa

1. Vijayaragava Vinayagar
2. Mooshikan

3. Flag Staff Nandi
4. Bali Peeta
5. Dvarapalikai
6. Vinayagar
7. Vinayagar
8. Adi-mudi Ariunadevar

(one whose beginning and end cannot be fathomed)

9. Ganapathi
10. Bairavar
11. Shanmugar
12. Valli
13. Deivayanai
14. Lingam
15. Dakshinamurthi

27. Ashta Laxmi Mandapam

1. Nandi
2. Bali peeta
3. Vinayagar
4. Subramaniar
5. Dvarapalikai (2)
6. Vinayagar
7. Choza Lingam
8. Chera Lingam
9. Vinayagar
10. Brahmi
11. Vaishnavi
12. Durgai
13. Mahesvari
14. Somesvarar
15. Nandi
16. Durgai
17. Brahma

28. Ghosta Sannadhis

1. Ganevi
2. Parvati
3. Manonmani
4. Sarasvati

5. Siva Durga
6. Chandikesvari
7. Bali Peetas (8)
8. Unnamulai amman (Main Deity)
9. Navagrahas (9)
10. Chitragupta

CHAPTER 8

Bronze Idols

In this sacred temple of Annamalaiyar, are several bronze idols many centuries old. These bronze idols inclusive of the enclosing arch-work are very heavy.

All images appear red as bronze is mixed in greater proportion in the mixture of five mineral elements. Most of the Images are provided with patra peeta or padma peetah. During times of festivals all these idols are decked in jewels and fine cloth to be taken in procession.

These images provide the opportunity for the Lord gracing the sanctum to come out in procession. For every Deity existing in stone inside the temple there is a counter part in bronze.

These idols are brought out during festivals with the intention that even people outside the temple should have darshan (see) and be enlightened and blessed.

As this Thiruvannamalai sthala has several festivals every month, all the bronze idols appear clean and bright.

Some of the bronze idols in this shrine have gold sheaths. Vinayaga and Biksatana images present themselves with gold covering. This golden sheath is used during important days.

All bronze images except the bed chamber Annamalayar (palli-arai) are as exquisite as those of other temples.

Most of the Images are only in the Mandapa called Pokkisha Mandapa (Treasure Room) Big Somaskanda,

Thani Amman, Ardanarisvara etc are in the Mandapas of the Corridar.

Images of Devis like Para-Shakti are in the Amman shrine.

The images of Arda-narisvara and Arupattu Muvar (63 Nayanmars) come out in procession only once in the year.

Ganapathi

The bronze idol of Ganapathi is about 2 ft high (60 cms) and is in a standing pose. He has Ankusa in the upper right arm, Pasa in the upper left arm, the tusk in the lower right hand, and the modaka in the lower left hand. He presents a charming picture with a Siras-Chakra and a bell in his trunk.

Pradosha Nayagar

This bronze idol about 2 ft high (60 cms) is called Sri Mula Nayagar. The image of Chandrasekara and the Devi nearby are seen standing in one patra peeta. Lord Siva is seen with Axe, Deer and Abaya Mudra. His left hand is embracing the Devi. This idol is used to be taken in procession inside the temple during Prodosha. It is never taken outside.

Subramania

Lord Muruga cast in bronze has six arms and stands as Devasenapathi. Single faced. He sports six arms wielding vajra, sword, dagger, and shield exhibiting Abaya and Simhakarna mudras.

The peacock is behind the Lord who stands on the patra peeta. Valour anklets, symbol of valour, sacred thread, Udara Banda, and Patra Kundalas adorn Him.

Valli

The bronze image of Valli, stands adorned with patra Kundalas, in her ears, covering for breasts.

Deivayanai

The bronze idol of Deivayanai is ornamented with Makara Kundalas, sacred thread across her breasts, bangles in her hands, anklet, ring, Hara and Siras-Chakra.

Asthra Devar

This image of bronze has Vinayaga in front and Rishabavahana behind and is taken out during festivals.

Chandrasekarar

Chandrasekarar in bronze presents himself in a standing pose, with jatamakuta, axe, deer, exhibiting Abaya Varada mudras. Clad upto knees, he is decked with udurapanda, sacred thread and ornaments in chest. He is about $3\frac{1}{3}$ ft high (105 cms)

There is another image of chandrasekarar of 15-16 th century. This is smaller than the former chandrasekara. Hence this is called Chinna (small) Chandrasekarar.

Chandrasekara Amman

This Devi, is seen standing without any Covering for breasts, makara Kundalas in cars and an ornament in her waist. This image in 3 ft. (90cms) high.

In her waist the dress is fashioned in Simha Muka knot. The deer, in katri Mudra seen standing it is two fingers with its two legs planted.

The finger prints in the hand are unique unlike usually found in other idols. Siras-Chakra and many jewels adorn the image.

The other Devi, near the small Chandrasekarar, is in a standing pose bereft of the covering for the breasts, cloth extended to the knees the sacred thread across the chest, curved kolusu and padukam in the legs. It is 2 1/4 ft high.

Ardanarisvarar

The idol Ardanarisvarar is seen standing in Patra Padma peeta, attached with the enclosing Tiruvasi (Arch). His coiffere is jata Makuta. Slightly unaligned wielding axe, lily, Abaya hasta, the left lower arm poised on the waist, He presents himself.

Makara Kundalas adorn the ears. Sacred thread, Siras-chakra are the ornaments.

Tiger skin covers the right leg upto the knees, and the left upto the ankle. The left chest portray feminine features. The circular indentures in the neck look like ornaments.

This bronze idol is not used for festival processions. Only during the Jothi Darshan of Karthigai, it bestows darshan within the temple to the Pancha Murtis, the legend of bestowing the left half of the body to Uma. Then the image is taken inside.

Small Somaskandar

The Deity seated in Sukasana Pose on Padma peeta, wields axe, deer, and Abaya-Varada mudras. Jata-makuta and Makara Kundalas also adorn. Kapala, Snake, Moon and Ganga are found in the jata-makuta.

The Devi with Simha-karma and Varada mudra is nearby. Greeta-makuta and the covering for breast is absent. This is dangling the left leg. The hair is beautifully partitioned.

In between them in the front, Kanda is found standing. He holds lilis in both hands. It is not clothed, and stands in Padma Pita to a height of $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft (45 cms).

The Deity and the Devi stand to a height of 2 ft (60 cms) each.

In the Padma peeta of Kanda, the word 'Thiruvannamalai Subramaniar' and in the peeta of the Deity 'Thiruvannamalai Vumanama'. are engraved.

Single Devi

This bronze image of $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft (105 cms) height, is seen standing on the padma Peeta. It is clothed upto its knees. It has a Siras chakra too. Two rows of gem garlands encircle the neck. Patakam and Kolusu adorn the legs. The arms are decked with Vahu Valai, Karai, and finger rings.

This idol is taken in procession during festivals in Ani and Marghzi. This comes twice in the first festival and only in the evenings during the second festival.

In some festivals, the big Somaskandar too is taken out.

Big Somaskandar

This Deity is seated in Padma peeta wielding Axe, Deer and Abaya mudra. The Jata makuta and the padma peeta are unique. Udarabanda and tiger-skin too adorn the image.

The Devi sporting Karanta-Makuta dangles her left leg. Lily and Varada mudra are exhibited in her hands, and She presents a very charming pose in her seated posture

Kanda has padma flowers in both hands. A waist band circles his waist. Padma Kundalas are his ear ornaments. This is the Main Somaskandar. Diamond diadeem and Hasta are some of its ornaments.

Single Devi

This image of 4 ft (120 cms) hight slightly inclined forward, presents a very charming spectacle and looks as if holding something. Karanta makuta, Makara Kuntala, and Siras Chakra enhance her beauty. The arms are long and reach below the knee. The fingers of the left arm seen to be linked.

Baktha Anugraha Somaskandar

This idol is the oldest image in this temple. This image of the 11 th century. is exceedingly charming to behold. A unique feature in this is the presence of both Kanda and Ganapathi. This is never taken out in any procession.

In the Jatamakuta of the Deity are found the Moon, Snake, the Third eye, sacred thread and Udarabanda. The affire falls upto the thigh. A gem in the right leg, three necklaces in the neck, axe, deer and Abaya mudra are some ornaments.

The Goddess poses Simha karna Mudra and Varada Hasta.

In between is seen Skanda of five feet height and holding padma flower.

To the right of the Deity towards the end of the peeta the crawling of Ganapathi is of unparralled beauty.

Single Devi

The single Devi linked with the above mentioned Somaskandar, is about 2 1/2 ft high (75 cms) and is adorned with Makara Kundalas.

Bhiksadanar

This bronze idol of 3 ft (90 cms) height is seen feeding grass to the deer in the right side and a dwarf gana (1 1/2 ft - 45 cms) is stationed towards the left. This Image is used for taking out in procession. Wielding udukkai, Sula, tender shoots and Kapala, wearing a wooden sandel in the legs, holding a staff padakam, kazal, and gem adorning the legs, He is in the act of stepping out. Bereft of any attire, only a snake (with its hood hear the left arm) girdles his waist.

The deer too is decked with Silambu in legs and germs around the neck. Rings sparkle in his fingers. The dwarf gana holds in left a pan.

The Udukka is found leather bound. Jata para Kundalas, Vahuvalai, Siras-chakra, a gem necklace and symbol of valour are some of his adornments. The Kapala in the centre of his head, Ganga to the right, and the crescent to the left, and snake are also seen.

This idol is taken in procession on the golden hued Meru in Karthigai festival.

Chandikesvara

The bronze Chandikesvara wields the Axe and sports a jata-makuta. A sacred thread runs athwart his Chest. In the big festival during Karthigai month, the last day festival belongs to him.

Vinayaga

This Vinayaga seen standing, wields Ankusa, Pasa, Tusk and Modaka.

This image takes part in the festivals of Vinayaga Chathurti in Avani and on the first day festival of the great grand utsava of Karthigai.

Shanmuga

This idol of 3 1/2 ft (105 cms) comes out only once in festivals of the year. Ablutions are performed for this image in a grand scale on all the six days of Kanda Shasti; on the sixth day it is taken out in procession.

Lord Shanmuga is seated on the peacock in Sukasana pose, The snake is entwined in its legs and mouth. Sporting six faces and twelve arms, Shanmuga is decked with Vira Khazhal. Vajra, Sakti, Bow, arrow, sword, shield, wheel, cock ensign Axe, pasa, and Mudras of Abaya and Varada are exhibited in his hands.

Valli

The idol of Valli, as usual is in a standing pose wearing Thodu in her ears.

Deivayanai

The image of Deivayanai bereft of breast covering, holds the lily and has Siras Chakra.

Appar

The four Samayacharyars are stationed opposite the Treasury Dais in the second prakara.

The image of Appar clothed only upto the knees, has the shrub remover in his shoulders. Seen in a standing posture, he has the Rudraksha bead garland. Kuzhais hang in his ears. Two rows of Rudraksha beads adorn his forehead.

Sambandar

This bronze image of Sambandar holds a pair of cymbals in both his hands. His jata makuta is formed into a knot sacred thread, a dollar necklace, attain to the knees and anklets form his decoration.

Sundarar

This idol of Sundarar, with his coifferun formed into a knot makara kundalas, udarabanda, sacred thread and

Vahu valai adorning stands in supreme majesly. Attire to the knee and many jewels add to his charm.

Manickavachakar

A Rudraksha bead on the forehead with beautiful curls is present on Manickavachaka. A tuft is seen on the head, while the robes fall to his knee wearing a sacred thread. He exhibits Chin Mudra and Rosary. His left hand holds manuscripts, in which is written the word 'Namasivaya'. His fingers are decked with rings.

The four images of these four Nayanmars are about 2 2 1/2 ft high and stand on Padma, Patra peetas.

Sxity three Nayanmars

The images of the sixty three Nayanmars commencing from Thillai Vazh Andanar to Sekkilar are about 1 1/4 ft (37 cms) high each. All these idols are taken out in procession on the 6th day of the Karthigai festival in the morning.

Pidari

The bronze pidari amman, in Sukasana seated pose wields flame in head, tusks, Udukkai, pasa, Sula and kapala. It is abot 1 1/4 ft high.

Besides these some more idols are found in the Amman shrine.

Big Para-Sakti

The image of this Devi is never taken out for processions. Wielding Ankusa, Pasa, Abaya, Varada, She stands 3 1/2 ft (105 cms) high. A bewitching smile pervades her face. Attired only upto the knee decked with many jewels, she exudes a beauty of her own. A unique ornament like the kumudam flower atop her ears adorns.

Para-Sakti

Both the big and small Parasakti idols are very old. But this Parasakti is a little new, being cast in this century. It is taken out during the Adi - Poora festival and finds a place in Navaratri functions and the Floating festival. Devoid of breast covering, she is found holding jatamakuta, Ankusa, pasa, Abaya and Varada. In her neck dangles the Mango

Chain. The design of the Thali proclaims that it is of recent times.

Bed - Chamber Amman

This idol is of later date one and quarter feet (37 cms) high, it is decked with Kirita makuta, breast cover, makara Kundala, Kolusu and padakam. The image is taken to the bed chamber at nights and taken back during mornings.

Nataraja is seen trampling Muyalaka with his right leg and dance the Ananda Tandava with his left leg. Peacock feathers, makuta, four braids (two on each side) adorn Him. Gems on right leg and tiger skin to the thigh are further decorations. Gudara banda closely twisted Uttariyas circular back each with fire blazes as halo, Kapala in the crown datura flowers, cresent, makara patra Kundalas, Udukkai in hand, fire, Abaya mudra are all the decorations provided. He is holding the fire in his palms. Ganga is enmeshed in his locks. An enigmalic smile crosses his lips. Five feet high, He is in Padma peeta.

Every year six ablutions are performed for this Nataraja. Of these the Ani Thirumanjana and Arudra Darsana stand foremost and take place in the thousand pillared Hall. A street procession also takes place.

Sivakami

Sivakami ammai is seen standing and holding something. In her neck are the Thali and Pottu necklace. It is about four and half feet high and makara Kundalas, Siras Chakra, Karanta makuta and many more jewels adorn.

Small Nataraja

The image of small Nataraja is 2 1/2 ft tall and is linked with the surrounding Arch.

Bed Room Deity

In this sacred sthalas the mountain itself is the form of God. It looks like a Sivalinga stationed on 3 crests. One cannot come across such a unique feature anywhere else.

CHAPTER 9

Surrounding Shrines.

Ani Annamalai Temple

Ani Annamalai temple is one of the three temples in this sthala which showers grace. This is an old temple existing prior to Annamalaiyar temple and is called Adthi Arunachala.

This shrine is located in the north-west of Thiruvannamalai town, about 6 miles on the circuit route of the hill towards the west.

The legend declares that in ancient times, Brahma got infatuated with Thilottama, his own creation and got rid of his passion only by worshipping a Sivalinga installed by him. In the East the Deity worshipped by Thirumal came to be known as Annamalai Nadhar, and that in the west worshipped by Brahma came to be called Ani Annamalai Nadhar.

The Lord enshrined here is Ani Annamalai. The temple also is known by the same name.

Here we see a temple for Manichavachaka, a shrine for Mariamman and two tanks.

In this temple, Ani Annamalai Nadhar is in the form of a Sivalinga in the sanctum and the Devi Unnamulai Ammai has a separate shrine. Within this temple in the north of the main threshold is Palani Andavar and Sambanda Vinayagar in the south. The paintings of the 63 Nayanmars can also be seen. Images of Nalvar and Somaskandar are also kept here. As seen in other temples here too we find Ganesa, Chandrasekara, small Chandrasekara, Astra Deva, Subramania, Shanmuga, Gajalaxmi, Navagrahas and Chandikesvarar.

Thirunavukarasu Swamigal mentions in his Thevaram Hymns in seven songs about this Ani Annamalai. Manickavachaga Swamigal sang Thiruvembavai only here. A shrine has sprung in the very place he composed Thiruvembavai.

During Karthigai festival day all festivities that happens in the Annamaliar temple occur here too. The idols of Ani Annamalaiar join the procession of Annamalai Nadhar

During the day of Karthigai village folks light lamps of Thinai flour and worship.

This ancient temple of Ani Annamalai has been renovated by Nagarattars in the 20 th century and has been completely remodelled.

Sanjiviroyar Temple

The Sanjiviroyar temple is about 2 furlongs to the east. At present it is known as Iyyankulam. Indra Tirtha is here. The shrine is on the west banks of this tank.

Sanjiviroyar temple is one of the sub-shrines of Annamalaiar temple. In this temple are the Main Deity of Sanjiviroyar and festival idol.

Durga Shrine

The village Deity for Thiruvannamalai is the Durga. This temple is located very near the Annamaliar temple. The Deity is Papanasa Eswarar and the goddess is Annapoorani.

Annapurani.

Devotees throng this temple during Fridays, The Navaratri festival is held here in all pomp and glory for nine days. This Deity Durga is a veritable symbol of valour and heroism. Only after worshipping this Durga all festivities of Navaratri are conducted in other places.

The Flag is hoisted on Panchami Tithi during Karthigai festival for Annamaliar. The festival for this Durga takes place here 3 days before the first day for Durga, next day for Pidari, third day for Vinayaga, It is only on the fourth day that the Karthigai festival for Annamaliar commences.

CHAPTER 10
Sacred Tanks

A place acquires sanctily due to a temple, Deity and Tank. In some places, the temple will be famous, in some the Deity, in some the deity, temple and tank. In this sthala, the fame is because of the Dirty, temple and tank(s). There are several sacred pools in and around Thiruvannamalai.

Sivaganga Tank

The Sivaganga Tank is located within the temple south of the Kambathu Ilayanar shrine. This is a very picturesque pool. It is the general custom that one should bathe in this tank and then worship Annamaliar.

This tank has been provided with steps all round, and a Mandapa. Its sanctily is immeasurable.

Brahma Tirtham

This sacred pool is situated within the temple, opposite the Kala Bairavar shrine. This is provided with beautiful steps.

The ablutions for the Deity takes place in Sivaganga and Brahma Tirtha pools. Hence these are deemed to be very sacred.

Mountain Springs

There are about 360 pools formed in the form of Springs, and tanks. Most of them are not visible for our sight. The pool Simha Tirtha near Ramana Ashram is visible.

Madu Tirtha

The tank located near the temple of Ani Annamalai is a sacred one. Manickavachaga Swamigal in his song commencing with the words 'Painkuvalai' mentions it as Pongu Madu; 'Madu' means Tank. It is prescribed that one should bathe in this tank first and then worship Ani Annamalai Nadhar.

Katka Tirtham

The Katka Tirtha is near the Durga temple. Legends proclaim that Durga Devi worshipped God with water spring from a clift created by her sword thrust, to get rid of the sin of slaying Mahisasura. This tank is a relic of this legend.

CHAPTER 11

Places of Interest nearby:

It is natural that devotees who flock to visit Thiruvannalai to worship the Deity here, would like to visit same places worthy of sight. Hence a short description of such places wil not be out of place.

Ramanashram

Ramanashram has no rigid rules like other Ashrams. Based on the unity of Soul, it has a simple Charm.

Ramana Maharishi started from Trichuzi, his village to Tiruvannamalai, did penance there, got liberation, had many discipies and settled there itself.

Ramana's mother came here in 1917 and took her abode permanently. When his mother died in 1922, her mortal remains were interred in Samadhi in the place now occupied by the Ashram installed a Linga, and worshipped it as Matrubudesvarar. The site of the mother's Sannadi became Ramanashram.

Ramana Maharishi who was shedding grace to his devotees got salvation on 14.4.1950.

In the Ramanashram, two days are held in great veneration. One is the puja day of Matrubudesvarar, and the other is Ramana jayanthi. The former takes place on Krishna Paksha, Navami in the month Vaikasi. The latter occurs on the day of Arudra Darshna in month Marghazi. On both these occassions poor feeding takes places on a grand scale. The Ashram itself looks like a temple.

Matas

As free feeding takes place for nomadic sanyasies it is customary to feed all Sadhus in all choultries here. In fact

they were established for that specific purpose. Hence it became a unique custom to call choultries as Maths in Thiruvannamalai.

Besdes Matas not coming under this category are in plenty here. Prominent among them are Yoyamari madam, Sivakasi Madam, Maduraiyar Madam, Virudungar Madam, Noolkarar Madam, Kurummeriar Madam, Jnana deepa kudai madam.

Mile and Emblem Stones

The custom of fixing Mile stones in several parts of Tamil Nadu, was in vogue. Boundaries of land belonging to Siva shrines were marked with stones etched with Sula. They were called 'Tiruchulakkal'

Lands belonging to Vishnu temples were denoted with stones bearing emblem of 'discus'. and hence they were known as Thiru Azhikkal or Thiruchakkarakkal.

Similarly milestones on long roads were planted to mark boundaries, and they were known as 'salaikkal'. These salai stones can be seen, while making a round of the hill. They are more than 700 years old. Yet they look as fresh as on the first day. Various information are inscribed in these stones. They are of great historical value. The emblem of Pandyas - Two fishes and a club are found in some.

Pavazhakunru Matam

The Pavazhakunru is to the east of the mountain Annamalai; the sthala hill. In the tract which was a dense forest once, Gautama Maharishi created a leaf cottage and meditated on Annamalaiar. The Tapovana where the goddess Annai Parasakti did penance to obtain the left portion of the Lord is also here. Thereafter several yogis, siddass did penance in this hill.

Azhakananda Jnana Desigar' a saint, was responsible for the blooming of this Pavazhakunru math. Pavazagirisvarar is enshrined atop this hill. This Sivalinga was worshipped by Goutama Maharishi. Muthambikai is the

name of the goddess. But the festival idol here is only Lord Subramania. A sanctum for Arumuga with Valli and Deivayanai is seen.

Viewed from the temple, this hill, the Annamalai hill the temple of Annamalaiar - all these present a panoramic view the scenary offered is exhilarating and entrancing.

Sathanur Dam

Sathanur dam is about 20 miles from Thiruvannamalai. A dam across the south pennar was constructed in 1957. Near the dam is a beautiful park.

This charming park has been filmed for Cinema several times. The coloured flood lights installed here flash its brilliance during Saturdays and Sundays. Formed in terraces, spread over 7 acres, this part is full of flower plants, shrubs and ornamental trees.

For the delight of visitors, bear, porcupine, hare and birds like pigeons are reared here.

Youngsters can play here to their heart's content and a swimming pool for elders has been provided.

Arrangements have been made to row in boats and enjoy the entire water-spread. Those who have never seen forts, can view here model forts. A Model Dam too, illustrating all the details are kept here.

A suspension bridge, and Fish Farm are added attractions.

Coloured statues find place and they appear exactly like real men.

Even the trees, which provided shade while constructing the dam have been honoured by providing lights and parks all round.

Chenji Fort

Chenji is on the road between Tindivanam and Thiruvannamalai. Here there is a famous historical fort.

A Vijayanagara King, the father of Krishna Devaraya is related to have erected a Fort here, as at Hampi. This Fort after changing hands several times was destroyed in the

wars. The most noteworthy King who ruled here was Raja Desingh.

The important hill here is Rajagiri. On the way to Rajagiri are the offices of the Archeological Department, a mosque built in 1718 A.D and the temple of Pattabiramah. The Pattabhi Rama shrine has a eight tiered Gopura and seversl mandapas.

On entering the Rajagiri the first structure encountered is Kalyana Mahal., built in Maharatta Style, and looks like the Tanjore Mahal. No wood has been used anywhere, and is 100 ft high. It is a seven storeyed structure with a gopura over it; steps have been provided to ascend and descend separately. In every storey, a square hall, an appliance to lift water, latticed windows and zenana quarters can be seen. In the ground floor,an island mandapa was constructed

Adjacent to the Kalyana Mahal are horse stables granite grinding stone, elephant's baths, Wrestling arena, explosives storing room, granary, prayer Hall, Chetti tank, the Dais where Raja Desing and his wife were cremated Chakkarai tank and Hanumar temple, all at the base of the hill. They all deserve to be seen.

The monotithic artistic pillar that adorned the Venkataramana temple here has been removed by the French and installed near the sea shore at Pondicherry to support the base of the Dupleix statue.

The Fort atop Rajagiri was erected in 1200 A.D. This hill was originally known as Anandagiri. The Maharatta King Sivaji, in 17th untury A.D. renovated this fort, strengthend it and renamed it as Rajagiri.

This Fort is at a height of 968 ft from sea level, 800 ft from the base., and twice the height of the Trichy Rock Fort. It is necessary to cross 9 gates to reach it.

Near the fourth gate, are Canon, Bala Aranganatha temple, Choultry, Tank, Kuvala Kanni amman shrine etc.

The ascent from the fourth gate is steep. Inside the eighth gate, near the entrance between the boulders is a

wide space. To cross this space, a wooden bridge on iron pillar has been provided.

One the top of the hill are the Mint, a Spring which has never felt the rays of the Sun, a temple without idol, the Durbar Hall of Raja Desigh, a clock tower, a Canon of old time etc.

The hill Chandragiri is to the south and Krishnagiri is to the north of this mountain. Chandragiri is also known as Chakkili Malai, Changili malai; and Chandraroyan Durgai, Kalayana mahal, Ranganadar shrine, Vasanta mandapa, Canon support, Sipoys mandapa and Bhadrakali temple are on Krishnagiri.

CHAPTER 12
Festivals

Many are the festivals that are celebrated in Thiruvannamalai. From Inscriptions, we learn that some of these festivals are remnants of ancient times. The Epigraphs speak of Kartigai festival, Marghazi festival, Thai festival and Panguni festival.

During the reign of Rajendra Chola, the Karthigai and Panguni festivals were celebrated in a grand manner. When Kulottungan was ruling, a festival during Thai was added; yet the Kartigai festial only was held in great esteem.

Several munificent people have donated gifts to feed pilgrims drawn to the festival. On the day when Annamalai Nadhar goes out in the hunting festival during Kartigai, arrangements have been made to feed on a grand scale. Dances are arranged. Perfumary coating for Nataraja is done on Kartigai when the Idol is taken in procession.

Merchants have gifted (cloth) for Dwajasthamba on Kartigai, Panguni and Thai festivals.

It is customary to convey Chandesa, and Nalvar like Jnanasambanda from several temples during Kartigai, on all the ten days.

Endowments have been instituted for thousand pot ablutions during Uttarayana and Dakshinayana Sankramanas and for free feeding. Gifts have poured for ghee ablutions for Nataraja during Thiruvadirai.

Inscriptions reveal several gifts for daily rituals and their modes in Annamalaiar temple.

The details of the festivals occuring at present are detailed below.

1. Pancha Parva Vizha

The Pancha Parva Vizha is the name of the festivals that take place during Amavasya, Kartigai, Pradhosa, Sukra Varam and Soma Varam every month in this temple.

Monthly festivals.

Chitrai: Chitrai vizha occuring for 10 days. This festival closes on in Chitra Pournami. The Manmada Dahana (burning of Cupid) also takes place there.

Vaikasi: Visaka festival occurs.

Ani: Commences on the 21 st day of Ani month and runs through 10 days in Dakshinayana. Ani Thirumanjanam is the festival when ablutions for Nataraja are done in Uttara star in the Thousand pillared Hall for 2 days.

Adi: The Adipoora Vizha for Parasakti occurs for 10 days. On the 10 th day Valaikappu (Bangles wearing) and Fire Walking take place. On 15th August, the Arunagiri Nadhar Vizha is celebrated.

Avani: Avani Mula Vizha - 1 day.

Vinayaga Chathurthi Vizha.

Purattasi: Navaratri Vizha 10 days.

Iyppasi: Skanda Shasti - 6 days. Soora Samhara occurs on the sixth day.

Kartigai: 1008 Sangu Abhisekam every Somavaram in the month of Kartigai. This is considered sacred and attended by many.

Thiru Kartigai Vizha: 13 days; on the 10 th day the Thiru Kartigai takes place. The most important festival of the temple (and town).

Margazhi: Commencing on the 21 st day of Marghazi, the Uttarayana festival occurs for 10 days. In month Marghazhi on Thruvadirai 10 days festival for Manickavachaka. This takes place in the Thousand pillar Hall.

Thai: On the 2nd day of Thai, the Thiruvudal festival occurs.

Bathing festival at Manularpet takes place on the 5th day of Thai. On Rathasapthami day sacred bath takes place in Kalasapakkam.

Masi: Vallalar Maharaja festival on Masi Maga day and Final Ceremonies. On Amara Chathurdasi Maha Sivaratri is celebrated. This is important for Lord Siva.

Panguni: Six days festival of Panguni Uttaram.

CHAPTER 13

The great festival of Deepa Darsana (beacon of Light)

The Lord with third eye burnt Muppuram (Bonfire).

The Lord who has three eyes burnt Mupparam simply with his Smile. Bliss-reduces all Sins to ashes.

The Earth is His Chariot. The Sun and the Moon are its wheels. The Vedas which reveal the Truth are the horses. Brahma who taught the Truth to all sages is the Charioteer, Mount Meru, the golden bow, Vishnu the preserver of the world the arrow. Inspite of all these equipments, not using a single material, by his simple smile the Asuras who had castles in the air, and ere destroying the world, were reduced to ashes. This Lord is Siva, Tripura Samhara murthi.

The inner strength of strong men is capable of wiping off all evils. Ahimsa Dharma should be observed only after obtaining strength. That only will yield good to the world. It is that peace of Ahimsa, that makes evil reduce themselves

to nothing. The day when Tripura was burnt is the Kartigai or the Deepa Festival.

Those who witness this Deepa Festival burn the base desires arising in this body of flesh, and realise the Sivananda Jothi of Supreme Wisdom.

This Annamalai Deepa brings to our mind a recollection of this Supreme Wisdom. Annamalai is the Lord whose beginning and end are unfathomable.

Brahma and Thirumal were the charioteer and the arrow at the time of the burning of the Tiripura. These two searched the holy feet and head of Siva in futility and proved to the world that the Lord is unfathomable.

The Legend:

While Lord Siva was seated in Mount Kailas with Devi Uma, a ghee lamp there was in the process of extinction. A rat nearby approached it to drink the ghee and in that act the wick was pushed out a little, enabling the flame to brighten. This pious act though unintentional, resulted in the rat securing a human birth with huge wealth and the rank of a King. And with that prosperous boon the rat was born in the earth.

The rat was born as Mabali in this earth. Mabali, while reigning in all glory, one day wanted to worship Siva, and went to a shrine of Siva with royal paraphenalia.

While in the temple, a drop from a ghee lamp burning there, fell upon Mabali The King got sores form that red hot drop and the malady continued for a long time.

It was then when Lord Siva proclaimed in an aerial voice "King, thou are very arrogant. Hence you got this trouble through me. From this day if you light Siva shrines with ghee, you will be rid of those sores and live happily."

Highly delighted on hearing these words the King from that day commenced lighting Siva temples and dark places with ghee lamps. Lord Siva looking at the King's piety, gave

him liberation in the month of Kartigai on star Kartigai during poorva Paksha.

The Devas who congregated at that time for worship of Siva saw the effulgence of the Lord getting brightened, began praying and offered Aval (puffed rise) to mitigate the heat of the Lord.

And for the reason that Lord Siva appeared before King Mabali in the form of Light on this day, it has become customary to celebrate this Deepa Darsana in all Siva Shrines on Kartigai month poorva paksha, Kartigai star. Besides all houses are lit brilliantly, and a huge bonfire made.

The Significance of puffed rice and Jaggery.

The purity of Puffed rice is equalled by its selfless helping quality. It is a symbol of Pure heart and mercy. The Mayura Sthala Purana relates that puffed rice mixed with sweet jaggery should be made as an offering.

The sweet puffed rice ball represents the pure Siva and the selfless king Mabali and the Bliss enjoyed by Jivatmas.

Kartigai and Kanampullar

Those who light lamps in Siva Temples will shine in the True wisdom. Such an offering was performed by Kanampullar Nayanar.

This Nayanar used to cut a grass called Kanampul, sell it and with the proceeds used to light lamps in Siva shrines. Some time afterwards the grass could not be sold.

On the day of Thirukartigai Kanampullar found that the grass was insufficient. Out of supreme piety he burnt his own hair. The Lord who burnt the pura, appeared before him and blessed him.

Kartigai Deepa Festival

The Kartigai Deepa Festival takes place for 13 days in this sthala. Of these the first three days occur in Durga Temple and the remaining ten days in Annamalai temple.

Festival days

1. **Durgambal festival:** During the night of this festival Durga Amman is taken in procession in Vimana.

2. **Pidari festival:** During this festival, the goddess Pidari comes out in procession on Lion mount.

3. **Anukjai Vignesvara Puja:** In this festival, God Vinayaga is taken out in the streets on a silver Mooshika, his Mount.

First festival: Five Deities in the morning - Silver Vimana - the Five Deities in the evening - Mooshika, Peacock, Adikara Nandi, swan, small Bull Vehicles.

Second day Festival: In the morning Chandrasekar and Vinayagar, in Vimana. Vehicle is Suryapraba. In the evening the five Deities, Silver Indra Vimana procession.

Third Day festival: In the morning Vinayaka, Chandrasekarar, Vimana, Buta Vehicles. In the evening the five Deities, Lion Vehicle, Silver Swan Vehicle procession.

Fourth day festival: In the morning Vinayaga Chandrasekarar, Vinayaga Snake Vehicle. In the evening the five Deities Silver Kalpataru, Silver Kamadhenu procession.

Fifth day festival: In the morning vinayaga Chandrasekarar. Mooshikam, Mirrored Bull Vehicle. In the evening five Deities. Silver Moshikam, Silver peacock. Big Silver Bull Vehicles. procession.

Sixth day festival: In the morning Vinayagar Chandrasekarar, Mooshikam, Silver Elephant, 63 Năyanamars Vimanam. In the evening the five Deities, Silver Car, Indra Vimanam and other silver vehicles procession.

Seventh day festival: In the morning the five Deities car. Dragging the rope of the car in Vrichika Lagna. In the evening the five Deities returning from car.

Eight day festival: In the morning Vinayaga, Chandrasekarar Silver Vimanam. In the evning at 4 p.m.

Bhiksandar festival on goldern Meru: At night the five Deities. Horse vehicle procession. .

Ninth day festival: In the morning Vinayaga, Chandrasekarar Mirror Vimanam. In the evening the five Deities. Kailasa Vehicle, Kamadhenu Vehicle procession.

Tenth day festival: In the morning Barani deepam. At noon sacred bath in Brahma Tirtham. At 6 p.m. the five Deities proceed in golden Vimanam. Great grand Deepa Darsan. At'night the five Deities proceed on golden Bull Vehicles.

Eleventh day festival: At night at 7 p.m. float for Chandrasekarar. Annamaliar going round the hill.

Twelth day festival: At 7 p.m. at night float for Parasakti Amman.

Thirteenth day festival: At 7 p.m. at night float for Subramaniar.

Fourteen day festival: Chandikesvarar festival procession on Silver Bull Vehicle.

Whenever it is a worm or bird or insect or tree or dog or brahmins, or ambitious if they witness the Deepa Darsana on the 10th day, they will be released from re-birth;so proclaims the Vedas.

CHAPTER 14

Sculptures and Paintings

Annamalaiar temple which spreads the fragrance of Bliss, shines not only as a temple for grace, but also as a repository for artistic beauties. This temple infuses a spirit of devotion among mankind, and shelters sculptures and paintings that gladdens one's heart, and indicates our culture.

Sculptures:

The Thousand pillard hall in the Annamaliar temple true to its name has thousand pillars. At the top and base of

these pillars, sculptures of Naick Period adorn. Some of the sculptures in the pillars have the images of Siva and induce devotion. Besides, some images of Sages, forms of Vishnu, floral designs and such proclaim the excellence of our artistic heritage.

In the temple of Pidari, the images of Sapta Mathas (Seven Mothers) are chiselled in separate stones in lifelike manner. Of these images that of Nidhambasundani excels in beauty.

In the space of the prakara adjoining the tower of Vallala Maharaja, a unique feature, not found elsewhere can be seen. On the western side of the wall, a figure of the bird Gandaberunda- the royal emblem of the Hoysalas, a hero fighting a tiger are sculpted. Apart from these, a continuous frieze of a conversation of a King with fishes and a bunch of flowers on both sides are also chiselled.

The sixteen pillars adorning the Mahamandapa of the shrine of Unnamalai amman are a Treasure House of Art and reveal the intricacies of the canons of Art. In these pillars are Ashta Laxmis, Rudra, Durga, Maha Sakthi, Maha Sarasvati, Siddi Vinayagar, Virabadra all scintillating with superb workmanship.

The sculptures that adorn the Gopuras, Vimanas, the stucco images of the pillars and walls are a feast to the eyes.

Paintings:

The Paintings found in this temple belong to a superior calibre and have been allotted a honourable niche in the evolution of paintings. In the ceiling of the Mandapas of this temple, one can feast his eyes on excellent paintings in colour.

In the ceiling of the corridor of the second prakara, some five paintings have been extended. One of that illustrates a

hero fighting with a tiger. This is a very charming painting. The tiger in all ferosity with mouth wide open limbs extended, spring on the hero. The act of the hero too fighting with the tiger and piercing it with a sword is well depicted.

Adjoining it is painted a scene of a sage sitting on a tree.

Another painting is a figure sitting on a swan within a circle; probably this represents Manmatha.

In the ceiling of the corridors of the prakara, are painted several floral designs in exquisite colour.

In the gopura erected by Krishna Deva Raya there is a beautiful painting. In its centre is painted a royal elephant well adorned. On its either side in the front and back are two warriors who seemed to have controlled elephants after hunting them, with arms in their hands. This painting is rather big.

Just above this painting, in the centre ther is a figure which looks like a King. Behind him stands his wife. To their front and back girls are seen dancing with drumsticks in their hands.

Some figures have been painted in the ceiling of the elephant stable. Unfortunate it is filled with soot. Only in some places are fragments visible. The charming of the milk-ocean, the wedding of Uma and Siva are seen.

In the mandapa of Sarvasiddi Vinayagar temple paintings of later date depicting aspects of Siva are to be seen. The horse stable mandapa ceiling also possess some fine paintings of Naick period. Most of these are in black colour.

The Thirukkalyana mandapa has figures of Navagrahas on their mounts. The twenty five manifestations of Siva, fight between Elephant and Tiger, fight between Deer and Tiger, Cock fight, Ram fight, are all some of the paintings. Gopika-Krishna, Nataraja and Kali dance, valorous games of soldiers, spliting plantain on stomach, Trapeze, Elephant rolling a sphere, Bear waling and several such items too find place. Duchasana disrobing

Droupadi, Death due to drinking poisonous water, the figures of saptamathas are in one segment.

While coming round the mountain one comes across a mandapa called Ezthu Nilai mandapam containing some paintings. Churning the Ocean of Milk, Marriage of Siva Parvati are some of the scenes.

Ramayana episodes also form a part. The pranks of Krishna with gopis too find a place.

The entire legend of Muruga marrying Valli is beautifully painted.

The dress and ornaments depicted here are similar to the designs of the period of the Vijayanagara King Krishna Deva Raya. All these painting bear labels at the bottom furnishing the titles.

Beautiful paintings of the 63 Nayanmars are found in the south part of the corridor in Ani Annamalaiar temple.

The paintings found in this Thiruvannamalai temple are of superb calibre and possess artistic excellence.

CHAPTER 15

Renovations of Chola period

The reign of Rajendra Chola I belongs to the eleventh century. During the period of this monarch, several renovations to the Annamaliar temple took place. Pandi Udaya Divakaran was an employee of this King and he belonged to Raja Raja Nallur, of Arvala Kurram of Arul Mozhi deva Vala nadu of Chola mandala. He gifted an image of Bhiksadanar to the temple and also provided for its daily worship.

There, daily worships (morning, noon and night) were conducted and Divakaran arranged for providing 2 nazhis rice, in the morning, 4 nazhis for noon and 2. nazhis for night pujas. Besides, several food offerings also were made and articles such as pepper, salt, ghee, curd, oil, betal necessary for such offering were given.

For this purpose 160 halams of paddy per annum was gifted. The measure by which these articles were measured was known as "Thiruvannamalai Marakkal".

To yield that paddy four pattis of land was purchased and donated. Kizhaipatti, Naduvilpatti, Malaipatti, Anai Ethapatti are their names. The paddy from these villages should be given to the temple. It was ordered that this paddy should be utilised for performing pujas to Bhiksadanar.

Divakaran has instituted more reforms. He arranged for offering to Thiruvannamalai Nadhar, when the Lord proceeds on Hunt in the month of Kartigai. At the same time he also provided 'Chatti Choru' (meals in pot) for devotees as prasada, and for that purpose he gave 7 Kazhanjas gold. Out of this 7 Kazhanjas the assembly of puliur received 4 kazhanjas and agreed to give paddy every year for Great offering. The paddy was used to purchase sacred food, pepper, salt, ghee, curd, 8 plantains, 20 nuts, 80 betals, fuel, tender plantain shoots, pots, and for potter.

The remaining 3 khazanjus was received by the Assembly of Vairamega Cathur Vedi Mangalam and by way of interest agreed to supply paddy. This income was utilised to - provide food to devotees during the festival of Thiru Kartigai.

'Chatti Choru,' means 2 nazhis rice, pepper, salt, ghee, curd, 4 nuts etc. paddy should be given with fuel to cook, person who supplies fuel, leaf to close the pot etc.

This Divakaran arranged for oblutions to Thiruvannamalai Nadhar, Pancha Karya daily. 2 lamps to be burnt daily before Bhiksadana, 14 sandhi lamps to be lighted around the Vimana. And for the oil for these lamps, 528 sheep were donated.

During the reign of Rajendara Chola, there was a feeding House here with his name. Provision was made to feed moffussil pilgrims in this Rajendra Chola Feeding House. The Assemblies of several villages received money from the Temple, and sold land. Adayur, Rajendra Chola Nallur, Mycharrur, Madurantaka Eriomathipikanda Nallur,

Kulakudi are some such villages. The cost of this land was 40 gold Kazhajus for a pattial. The proceeds of the land went for feeding.

The Annamaliar temple received several endowments like this during Chola period.

CHAPTER 16

The charities of Nagarattars

The term Nagarattars denoted the Nattukottai merchant. Hence they are known as Nattukottai Nagarattars. Tamil Nadu comprised of Chera, Chola and Pandya regions. The Chera region was of two territories Kongu and Cheram. Pandya region comprised of Sentamizh pandy and Koduntamizh pandy. Similarly chola country had Tondai nadu, Nadu nadu and Chola nadu as its divisions. Of these, Tondai Nadu had further sub-divisions. That was called Arunai Nadu. Arunai nadu was an internal part of Tondai Valanadu. Though Arunai nadu was small in area, it was big culturally. When Marai Jnana Desigar spoke of this Arunai nadu, he remarked that "Arunai Nadu was full of learned men. They strove to achieve liberation. As those who sought such achievement needed solitary regions. There were munificient men who provided such places of solitude and food for sustenance". The Nagarattars saw this famous Arunai nadu, met Gurumurthm received his merciful grace, and were bound by love. They made Kunnakkudi as the Head Quarters, marked boundaries for their 96 settlements. And from that ancient times Arunai Nadu became the region of Nattukottai Nagarattars.

The 96 settlements of Nagarattars are embracive of Thiruvudal street of Annamalai Nagara in Arunai Nadu. Are you thinking how it is possible? The Oyamari Madam is located in this Annamalai Nagar. It is broad as an ocean, high as a hill and charitable as rain. This Oyamari madam belongs to the Nagarattars family both husband and wife.

This Oayamari madam has a place in every heart. Similarly Arunai nadu too has shrunk in size, took the shape of Kunrakudi and shrunk shrines bestowing grace to all.

Because of its links with historic part the Nagarattars have become inseparable from Annamalai Nadhar. Many are the charities of the Nagarattars who have donated to this Lord; and equally great are the renovations they have carried out in this temple.

Nagarattar Charities

1. **Oyamari Madam:** There are many pious acts the Nagarattars have contributed to the temple of Thiruvannamalai. The foremost among such deeds is the Oyamari Madam. The name itself suggests that feeding is continuous. This is a common place for all Nagarattars.

2. **Sadus Choultry:** This famous choultry was founded by Sa.Na. Sattapa Chettiar. Feeding is provided for devotees here. Milk and oil for ablutions to Annamaliar is sent daily from this place.

3. **Madam of 63 Nayanmars.** This math was built by the munificence of Nagarattars. Now a primary school is being run here.

4. **Veda Patasala:** Karaikudi Muthu. Aru family instituted this patasala in Car shed street. Here students learn Vedas.

5. **Pasu Madam:** This was founded by Kariakudi Sa. Na. Aa. Na family and have arranged for supply of milk daily morning and evening.

6. **Elephant:** An elephant to the temple was donated by Karaikudi Sa. Na. Aa. So. Annamalai Chettiar.

7. **Miscellaneous:** Supply of milk daily for ablutions to Annamalair, garden, Drinking water etc. are done by Nagarattars.

Deeds of Nagarattars

1. Big Car: Kanadukathan Va.Sa. Nagappa Chettiar has built a big car as the old car was damaged.

2. Car for Amman. Nattukottai Nagarattars repaired the Car of the goddess in 1956.

3. Golden Kavasha (Sheath)

Karaikudi. Sa.Na.Na family has provided a golden covering of artistic merit to Bhikshandar.

4. Silvar Car: Ramachandrapuram Thee Na. Nachiappa Chettiar has provided a wedding Hall (Kalyana Mandapam) Bed Chamber, Puja at midnight, and a silver car with a festival from his family funds.

5. Kili Gopura: Rao Bahadur pey. Ka. Aa. Chima. Virappa Chettiar MBE. has renovated the damaged Kili Gopura, Thirumanjana Gopura, Ammani ammal gopura, improved the stucco work, and reformed it. The corridors of Sivaganga and Brahma Tirtha were laid with fresh stones.

6. Thevara Patasala. Rao Bahadur pey. Ka. Aa. China. Virappa Chettiar MBE has by his effort purchased place in Thiruvudal street and built a structure. In that place the Thevara patasala was commenced.

7. Deeds of Two: Thi. So. Murugappa Chettiar and Rao Bahadur Pey. Ka. Aa. Chithi. Virappa Chettiar MBE have done many Charitable deeds. Jewels of red, green, and blue gems, golden and diamond ornaments, silver sheaths, silver puja vessels, wooden mounts, mirrored Vimanas. Float Vimana and buildings are some of their gifts.

Mounts and their Donors:

Silver Car and Building:Ramachandrapuram Thee, so. Thee. Na.. Thee. A. family

Car of the Main Deity:Kottaiyur, pey, na. Aa. Chitter. Virappa Chettiar and other Nagarattars.

Big Bull Mount and building:Kottaiyur Aa. Ka. Aa. Mey family.

Big Silver Indra Vimanam: Kottaiyur pey, Ka. Chithe Virappa Chettiar

Small silver Indra Vimana:	"
Silver Kalpa Tree:	Karaikudi Muthu
Silver Kamadenu and building:	Aru family

Car of the Goddess:	Kanadukkathan Sa. Rama. Mu. Rama. Ramasami Chettiar.

II Gifts of Jewels:

Jewels	Donor
Gem Kreeta	Arimalam Chey Chida. Chidambaram Chettiar.
Gem Kreeta for Thani Amman	Kanadukathan Ve. Vira Ne. Tru Nagappa Chettiar and others.
Golden Snake ornament	Kottaiyur Aa Ka. Aa. Mey Ve. family
Two diamond forehead plates:	Kothamangalam Rama Karu. Vey Pettachi Chettiar
Diamond Abaya for head for Somaskanda	Kottaiyur pey. ka. chitha. Virappa Chettiar.
Gold Covering for the main deity	Kanadukathan Sa. ka. Annamalai Chettair.
Diamond forehead plate for Main Deity	Kottaiyur Ka.Ka. Raman Mey. Chitha. Chidam-bara Chettiar.
Gold covering for festival Vinayagar:	Kothamangalam Chi.ka.chi.Rama. Raman Chettiar.
Gold sheath for Kambathu Ilayanar:	Devakotai a. peri. kare. Chida. Chidambaram Chettiar.

Besides these ornaments, diamond crown pearl necklaces, gold crown, Rudraksha necklaces, Kamalai

necklaces and many such jewels have been gifted by Nattukottai Nagarattars.

It may safely be said that there are no temples which have not been benefitted by the Charities of Nagarattars. There is no Deity that has not been worshipped by them. Yet it is only the Annamaliar temple that has been the recipient of the maximum donations from the Nagarattars.

CHAPTER 17

Inscriptions

Inscriptions are also a form of history. All such inscriptions are found in temples in South India. The inscription found in Annamalaiar temple are of great historic importance. The Archeological Department have copied 119 epigraphs of this temple. Most of them pertain to the cholas who ruled for a long time. The rest belong to Kopperunjinga Pallava, Pandayar, Hoysalas, Vira Vallala Deva Vijayanagara rulers, Krishna Deva Raya, Tanjore Nayak Kings, Seveppa etc.

The oldest inscriptions are found in the walls of the Sanctum: Those of a later date are on the walls of the built Prakara. The inscriptions of recent times are near the four entrances. The inscriptions reveal the growth of this temple through different periods.

Perusing from a historical angle, it is seen that only the sanctum was of stone upto the period of Rajaditya Chola (955 AD), the son of Parantaka I

In the wall of the first Corridor is found the inscription of Rajendra Chola I (18th year) The inscriptions of Kulottunga III, Rajaraja III, and Kulasekara Pandia are also found. There are 33 inscription in Kili Gopura. Of these, the oldest belong to King Vira Rajendra Chola (1063 A.D). This Gopura must have been built either in his time or a little earlier.

The Inscription of the year 1377 A.D is found in the walls of the Vallala Maharaja Gopura.

In the wall of the West tower of the second circuit the inscription of the year 1388 A.D. and in the wall of the Pey Gopura in the west of the third corridor is an inscription of the year 1374 A.D. These inscriptions reveal that this tower and its walls were built in 14th century A.D.

Krishna Deva Raya, the Vijayanagara King, erected the thousand pillared mandapa and the Sivaganga tank opposite to it. He also made preparations for crecting the big Rayar Gopura in the east.

The work commenced by Krishna Deva Raya in erecting the East Gopura, was finished by Sevappa, the Tanjore Nayak King.

These inscriptions thus reveal the gradual growth of the sanctum, wall, gopuras, Mandapas and Tanks.

Inscriptions of Nagarattar

In olden times the merchants had established a guild for them. That was called Nagaram. The place where merchants were in plenty was called Nagaram. There Guild also was known as Nagaram. Only those who were members in that Guild were called Nagarattars. During the reign of Rajendra Chola, (11th century A.D) there were Nagarattars in Thiruvannamalai. They too, as the present day Nagarattar evinced keen interest in Annamaliar temple. Some of the known names are:

1. Thiruvannamalai merchant Vaili Arayan
2. Adaikalavan Padiyanam
3. Vikramadityan Maruda Manickam
4. Koil Thiruvali
5. Sattan Adaikalam
6. Kavan Kutteran
7. Madevan Vilakkan.

These Nagarattars arranged for 1008 scared baths and great offering to the Annamalai Nadhar during Uttarayana and Dakshinayana.

Near Thiruvannamalai was a village called Mullur. In the lands of that Mullar village the Nagarattars were farming. And for irrigation, they secured water from a lake of the next village called Mathur, and in exchange for farming, they diverted all the taxes on those lands to the temple. It was decided that 32 Kazhanjus of gold should be paid. The person who decided this was an official of the government, called Raja Raja Muvenda Velan. And it was only with this 32 Khazanju gold that 1008 pot sacred bath was performed for Annamalai Nadhar.

The Pious Deeds of Three:

Of all the Kings who renovated the temple and donated liberally, the pallava King Ko-perunjingar Vijayanagara King Krishna Deva Raya, Tanjore Naik King Sevappa deserve special mention.

In the west wall of the first circuit, are inscriptional verse enumerating the pious deeds of Pallava King Ko-perunjingam and his son Veru Odeyan. The details are that Ko-perunjinga donated the entire taxes from wet and dry lands and other revenues withing the jurisdiction of Arunai Nadu, to reinforce the Charities of worship etc to Annamalai Nadhar.

Krishna Deve Raya came south from his capital, saw Kalathi and after worshipping here, reached Thiruvannamalai. In 1516 A.D. he gifted liberally, built the Thousand pillared Mandapa and donated some more gifts. He built the Sivaganga tank to celebrate Vasantha Vizha and dug a lake to set water for the Sivaganga Tank. The doors of the Unnamalai Nachiar temple in Annamalai temple, and Sadaipperumal Nayanar temple were repaired and the windows were sheathed with gold. The threshold of some other shrines were covered with gold and a well dug in front of the kitchen of Nachiar temple. A medallion of gems called 'Krishna deva Rayar Padakkam' was presented. All these details of gifts are recorded in inscriptions.

The work of erecting the great Eastern Gopura Commenced by Krishna deva Raya was completed in 1590 A.D. by the Tanjore Nayak King Sevappa. It came to be known as Rayar Gopuram. Many inscriptions of this temple speak of various improvements.

CHAPTER 18

Gleanings from History

The custom of naming walls of temples even in 13 th century A.D. Viraragavan wall Vanadi Rayan wall, Thiru Ekambamudiayan wall are all mentioned.

Streets: 'Thiruveedi Andargal' was the name given to those, who cleaned and kept neat the car streets around the temple. Their supervisor was known as Thiruveedhi nayagam. He controlled about ten Thiruveedi Andargal.

The streets around the abode of the Lord was called Thiruchuru and Thuruveedhi. The deities taken in procession in these streets were called Thiruveedhi Nayagar. and Thiruveedhi Nayagi.

An inscription in this temple speak of 32 Thiruveedhi Andars: gifts and lands given to them.

The streets were named after the presiding god and Kings who gifted to the temple. Epigraphs disclose that there were streets named Thiruvannamalai Udayar Thiruveedhi and Vikrama Pandian Thiruvidthi.

Vikrama Pandian

Of the later Pandya Kings, they bore the name of Vikrama Pandya and ruled. Inscription of this period are not available, During the time of planting milestones, it is seen that their names are mentioned.

1. Vikrama Pandian Accession on 1180 A.D.
2. Maravarman Vikrama " 1283 "
3. Jatavarman Vikrama Pandian " 1401 "

The Pandia rule was not in any way glorious during the reign of the last King Jatavarman Vikrama Pandian. The northern tract of Tamilaham was ceded to the Vijayanagara

Kings and the territory shrunk on that ·score. Hence Thiruvannamalai which was in the northern regions could not boast of any street or milestones.

Vikrama Pandia who came to the throne in 1180 A.D. was enthroned by Kullottunga Chola III and had to be a feudatory. Most of his rule was spent only in wars to protect his crown. Hence he was not in a position to lay streets or put milestones. But Jatavarma Kulasekara Pandian and Maravarman Sundara Pandian, believed to be his sons, have mentioned the term 'Peria Nayanar Vikrama Pandia Devar', to denote their father in inscirptions.

Maravarman Vikrama Pandian who was crowned in 1282 A.D. belongs to the 13 th century A.D. His rule extended even in the northern regions and during his period, Korkai, the sea port of Pandias was very famous. The king was also known as 'Korkai Kavalan'. The street Vikrama Pandian Thiruvidthi was named after him and milestones were planted.

Hoysala Kings

A Gopura and a circuit passage was built during the reign of the Hoysala King Vallala III. On the wall of the Corridor is seen a sculptural representation of a King crowning another King. In this piece is the figure of a Fish and a club. History relates that the Pandya rule was stabilised by the Hoysalas and this sculptures are visual representations.

After the Hoysalas it is a Vijayanagara ruler under Krishna deva Raya who patronised this temple much. This King in course of his various victories has performed the following charitable acts.

1. Thousand pillared Hall
2. A sacred pool for Vasanthothsavam
3. A lake called Thirumalai devi amman sea to secure water for the sacred pool.
4. A Eleven tiered Gopura
5. A mandapa for seventh day festival
6. A car for Vinayaga

7. Entrance Door
8. Uttama Cholan Threshold
9. Gold for the above entrance
10. Laves of Gold
11. Door for the entrance of Unnamulai Nachiar
12. Door for entrance to Sadayaperumal coil
13. A wall in front of Kitchen
14. Krishnadeva Rayar Medallion
15. A Naga ornament
16. Silver Indra Vimana
17. Golden gong
18. A silver pot for water for bath
19. A puja in his name
20. Appointment of Oduvars, Dancing girls, Adyayana recital, panguni festival etc.

Sevappa Naicka, his General was very helpful to Krishna Deva Raya in all his Charitable deeds.

Siege by the English

Thiruvannamalai is the first town met after crossing the Chenam pass. And for that reason it was also a military strong hold. A battle raged between Hyder Ali and the English between 1767 to 1782 A.D. This town was besieged several times upto 1791 A.D.

This shrine was damaged many times in the wars by Marathas, Muslm and English. People were slaughtered, houses were set on fire and property was looted.

When the English seiged the Thiruvannamalai region the temple was used to stock war instruments, explosives and Canons. The ammunition factory was established within. It was also used for soldiers for training. Even war horses were kept there turning it into a stable.

The Annamaliar temple was a very strong Fort, well fortified impenetrable stronghold during the time of the British. When the foes of the English attempted to enter the Fort, the temple was destroyed in some places. Inspite of political discussions and foreign attacks, this temple stands like a sentinal, showering grace.

CHAPTER 19

Devotees who worshipped in this Shrine

Of the twenty two sacred Siva Shrines in Nadu Nadu, Thiruvannamalai is the twenty second one. Many are the devotees who had worshipped Annamalai Nadhar, who bestows bliss on mere remembrance.

Thirujnanasambandar

Thirujnanasambandar decided to see and worship all the sthalas of Tondai Nadu. He started from Sirkazhi with some devotees, went to Thillai and worshipped Nataraja. Then he proceeded to Thirudhinai nagar, Thirumanikuzhi, Thirupathiripuliur, Thiruvadugur, Thiruvakkarai, Thiru Irambai Makalam, Thiruvadigai, Thiruvamattur, Thirukoilur and finally reached Thiru Arai Aru Nallur and worshipped the Lord there.

At that time, his co-devotees pointed out Thiruvannamalai to Sambandar. Perceiving the effulgent Lord of Thiruvannamalai from Arai Aru Nallur, he folded his hands, and sang hymns of 10 verses. This was sung in Naivalam of Nattapadai of Tamil Music.

After singing hymns he entered Thiruvannamalai and prostrated at the Lord's feet. Again he sang another humns in Takkesi Pann.

After Visiting some shrines in the north Sambanda reached Tondai Nadu.

Thirunavukkarasar

Thirunavukkarasar after worshipping at Thiruvanaikka Thiruverumbur, Tiruchirapalli, Thirukarkudi, and Thirupparaithurai went towards Thiruppainjili. On the way he suffered much due to hunger and thirst; still he moved on. Siva to remove his troubles created a grove and a tank on the way, took the form of a brahmin and waited with food. And when Navukarasar came near him. He addrssed him" You are very tired due to walking a long distance. I have some food, kindly partake it. Slake your thirst in this pool's

water, rest for awhile and then proceed." Saying thus, he gave him the packet of food.

Thirunavukkarasar took this as a divine blessing, ate the food offered rested for some time. When the brahmin asked him as to where he was going, he replied that he was proceeding to Tiruppaingili and resumed his journey.

Hearing this the brahmin said that he too was going to Thiruppainjili and joined him.

Both of them reached Thiruppainjili, but on reaching Tiruppainjili, the brahmin vanished. Navukkarasar was stirred with emotion at this miracle, praised god's grace again and again, went to the temple, sang hymns for Tiruppainjili Nadhar and spent his time by weeding the shrubs in the temple. A few days after he left this place and went to Thiruvannamalai.

Navukkarasar who reached Thiruvannamalai, realised that a birth is blessed only if spent in divine worship. He wove garlands of verses praising the Lord here. He sang Thiru Padikams in this sthala. Of these, two are of *Thiru Kurunthokai,* and one of *Thiru Nerisai.*

Sundarar

Sundaramurthi Swamigal also worshipped at Thiruvannamalai and sang many hymns. It is said that the *padikams* are 3,700, but only 100 are available now probably Thiruvannamalai Padikams might have been among the lost.

Though Thiruvannamalai Padikams are not traceable, the songs he had sung about Thiruvannamalai Nadhar in other sthalas reveal his intense devotion to this Lord as gleaned from the Thirupparam Kundram songs.

Manickavachagar

Manichavachagar too came to Thiruvannamalai, stayed for some time and worshipped. The portions in Thiruvachakam called Thruvembavai and Thiru Ammanai are his compositions.

It is learnt that he stayed here in the month Margazhi. Maidens got up from their beds in early dawn, swept the floor, drew *kolam* and went to bathe in tank. On seeing them Manichavachaka composed Thiruvembavai, to enable the girls to sing these songs of divine praise in each other's composing when they went to bath.

Marai Jnana Sambandar

Maraijnana Sambandar of Chidambaram came to Thiruvannamalai sthala, worshiped both Annamaliar and Unnamulai and then composed Arunagiri puranam.

Of the two puranams about Arunagirinathar this one is the earliest. This book is of 8 Sargas of 613 songs.

Isanya Jnana Desigar

Many were the saints that lived in Thiruvannamalai. Of them the most important was Isanya Jnana Desigar. He was possessed of Siddhi Powers and lived with the blessings of Annamalai Nadhar. Because he resided in the north east part (Isanya) of this town he was called Isanya Jnana Desigar. He was immersed in Nirvikalpa Samathi for some time in a cave in a mountain at Pakkam near Vettavalam.

At that time one named Muthusami Udayar was providing with milk daily, That help did not go waste. When he excavated the ground for building a house he got Treasure. The people of the locality gave him trouble by always demanding help from him. Hence Desikar left that place without anybody's knowledge.

When Desigar has departed, Muthusami Odeyar felt very depressed. Annamalaiar appeared in his dream and said "Dear devotee, You need not feel sorry, I am in the north east part of Thiruvannamalai. You come there". And in that place the Lord gave darshan to him.

Desikar melted at the grace of the Lord and composed 'Thothira Pamali,' a devotional hymn on Annamalai. He sat in deep contemplation under a huge banayan tree on the banks of this Isanya Thirtha.

T.6.

Virupatchi Devar

Virupatchi Devar was one of the Sages who did penance in Thiruvannamalai. He was here a few centuries back. Lord Annamalaiar gave darshan to this saint, while Annamalaiar was coming around the hill, He beckond Devar and seated him by his side in the palanquin.

Vadalur Vallalar

Arut Prakasa Ramalinga Adigal who lived at Karunguzhi and was worshipping the Lord at Chidambaram used to frequent several temples and worship. The Thiruvannamalai Padikam disclosed that he must have visited Thiruvananamalai: A song of his work indicates the very founding of Thiruvannamalai Sthala.

Arutkavi Arunagirinathar

Arunagirinathar was a Poet who led a blessed life in this world by the grace of Lord Muruga. He was a Jeevan Mukta. He was presented a Rosary and initiated by Lord Arumuga.

It was Lord Muruga, who as Gopurathan Ilayanar abides in the northern part of a Gopura in Annamalaiar temple, who blessed Arunagiri Nadha. It is the same Gopurathan Ilayanar who gave him the first sentence *"muthai tharu Bathi Thirunagai"* for his composition Thiruppugazh. Arunagiri Nadah, who was blessed by Muruga has praised this Sthala through thiruppugazh and also through various other songs.

Others

Ganapathi sastri who was an Asu Kavi, Seshadri Swamigal, Ramana Maharishi, Shanmuga Yogani, Pani pathirar Badhirachala swamigal, Iswara swamigal, yazpanan Gnanapragasan, yogi Ram Surathkumar and several people are those blessed at Thiruvannamalai by the Lord.

CHAPTER 20

Literature about Annamalai

Thiruvannamalai Sthala has the unique honour of finding a place of distinction in literature. Literature of same period. Religious works, sadakams Bakthi literatures, Kalambakam Puranas, Pillai Thamizh, Andadthi PadiKams are some extolling this Sthala. Further folk songs and proverbs too praise this place.

Sangam Classics

The mere mention of the place Thiruvannamalai will bring Karthigai Festival to one's mind. Because of The Karthigai Festival Thiruvannamalai has secured fame, The Sangam Classics praise this festival.

During the festival of the sangam periods in the month of Kartigai, lamps in rows. will be lighted in all houses, and a very big light lit at the top of the mountain so much so that the beacon and the festival will be one and the same. This is well illustrated in a song 141 in Ahananuru by Nakkirar and another song 202 in Natrinai by Padia Perungkadunggo.

In the 7th Century A.D. Kazhi Pilliar who travelled throughout Tamil Nadu propogating Saivisun through ecstasic Tamil songs, praised Thiruvannamalai in no ordinary terms. The Saivite truths he illumined are shining to this day. Every year during the month of Kartigai on the day of Kartigai a huge lamp is lighted at the top of the mountain and is celebrated as a big festival.

Religious literature

The Thiruvannamalai Sthala is highly spoken of in Peria purana, a high celibred literature of Saiva religion. Even in Villi Baratha, a Vishnavite classics, this place is eulogised.

Devotional literature

Devotional literature are in essence prayers. Of such prayers Thevaram, Thiruvachakam and the like stand supreme. They all praise this Annamalai Sthala.

Thirugnanasambanda in his Jeva Thirupadikam has beautifully expressed that this luminous mountain is only a form of Siva who appeared like a huge Flame before Brahma and Vishnu when they could not fathom the beginning or end of Lord Siva.

Thirunavukarasar too in his padikams has expressed that "he will not think of anybody except this Lord, praise none but the Lord; he has no other wealth than the lotus fub of Siva" and so on in ecastesy poured forth his heart.

Manickavachaka swamigal in his Thiruvembavai expresses that this mountain could not be fathomed either by Brahma or Vishnu. Even the Devas of the Celestial world worship Annamaliar.

Puranic Literature

Puranic literature are those which deal in the sthala puranas. Many are the literature(s) that speak of Annamalai. They are in chaste Tamil. Of them Arunachala puranam, Arunagiri puranam are some. Maraignana Sambandar in his Arunagiri puranam has praised Annamalai Nadhar with intense devotion. Divya Kavi Saiva Ellappa Navalar, is author of Arunachala purana, has eulogised this, Lord in ecstasic bhakti. His description of Siva is superb. Lord of Aurnagiri holds the deer released by the safes, in his hand. In his crown shines Gangai and his left side has been possessed by Umai. The God with the elephant face (Ganesa) looks like a coral mountain in his offspring. The Bull is his vehicle. Let us pray to this Lord and secure release from he disease of birth.

Besides some other puranas like Kanda purana, Thiruvilaiadal purana and such like speak of this Lord in glowing terms. Kachiappa Sivachariar has exquisitely described the legend of the failure of Brahma and Vishnu to fathom the nature of Siva.

Prabhanda literature

Many are the prabandas that have sprung for this sthala. Kalambakam, Sadakam, Andhadi, Malai, Padikam are some Prabandas

Thiru Arunai Kalambakam, Thiru Arunai Andhadi, Thiru Arunai Unnamulaiammai Pillai Tamizh are also some good literature. Serai Kaviraja Pillai composed Thiru Annamaliar Vannam, praising this Lord.

Folk literature

Folk songs are deemed to be Folk literature. In these Folk songs too Thiruvannamalai sthala is mentioned.

Kirtans

From the last century songs termed Kirtanas have arisen and have developed into literature. Following the method Virana pulavar of Kanchipuram has composed several Kirthanas in 1800 A.D. closely adhering to the Arunachala purana.

The Talas or Rhythm in this poems are soul elevating. Ulundurpet Shanmuganar the contemporary Tamil poet has sung a sweet poem.

Unwritten literature

Proverbs and folk music are unwritten literature. But it is only the proverbs that merit the title. Proverbs are of the experiences of social lives of the people. Hence they are woven into the fabric of people's life. Several proverbs have arisen about this sacred sthala.

CHAPTER 21

Book about this Sthala

1. Thirumandiram Thirumulai 9 poems 372 - 380
2. Thevaram - Sambandar - 1 padikam
3. Thevaram - Appar - 3 padikams
4. Thiruvachaka - Thiruvembavai - Manickavachaka
5. Eleventh Thirumurai - 4 poems
6. Thirupugazh - Arunagiri Nadhar

7. Arunagiri Puranam - maraignana Desigar
8. Arunachala Puranam - Saiva Ellappa Navalar
9. Peria Puranams - 8 poems
10. Kanda Puranam - 2 poems
11. Thiruvilaiyadal Puranam - Archunai padalam - one poem
12. Thiru Arunai kalampakam - Saiva Ellappa Navalar
13. Thiru Arunai Andhadi - Saiva Ellappa Navalar
14. Arunagiri Andhadi - Guhai Namasivayar
15. Arunai Thani venba - Guhai Namasivayar
16. Annamalai Venba - Guhai Namasivayar
17. Thiruvannamaliar Vannam - Serai Kaviraja pillai
18. Thiruvannamalai Kovai - Saiva Ellappa Navalar
19. Sonasailamalai - Sivaprakasa swamigal
20. Saraprabandam - Tapomayam Namasivayar
21. Annamalai Sadakam - Thiruchirramabala Kavirayar
22. Thiru Annamalai Thiru Arut Padikam - Ramalinga Adigal
23. Arunachalesar Varugai padikam - Saravana perumal pillai
24. Arunachalesar - Saravana Perumal pillai
25. Unnamulai Amman Padikam - Saravana Perumal pillai
26. Unnamulaiamman Varugai Padikam - Saravana Perumal pillai
27. Unnamulai Amman Sadaka - Chinnagounder
28. Arunachala Sadaka - Kanchipuram Sabapathi Mudaliar
29. Arunachala Padikam - Attavadanam Sabapathi Mudaliar
30. Arunachalesar Virtham -
31. Arunachalesar Navakarikai Malai - Kachi Kachalai Desigar
32. Arunachala Atchra Malai - Ramana maharishi
33. Karthikai Deepa Venba - Sonachala Barathi
34. Sonachala Venba - Sonachala Barathi
35. Sonachala padikam - Sonachala Barathi

36. Thiru Arunai Kali Venba - Sonachala Barathi
37. Thiruvannamalai Padikangal - Gnana Chittaswami
38. Annamalai Pancharatna
39. Annamalai Nanmani Malai
40. Unnamalai Amman Pillai Thamizh - Sonachela Mudaliar
41. Annamaliar Vannam - Thiyagaraja Pillai
42. Arunai Sladai Venba Malai - Vira. Ley. Chinnaiyan Chettiar
43. Thiru Arunai Pathirrupattandhadi - Sonachela Barathi
44. Thiru Arunai Kalyanasundarar Padikam - Sonachala Barathi
45. Thiru Arunai Ucchi Vinayagar pancharatnam - Sonachela Barathi
46. Annamalai Namavali - Sonachela Barathi
47. Annamalai Annal Malai - sonachela Barathi
48. Arunai Dhyana Panchkam - Sonachela Barathi
49. Arunai Bhiksatanar Arputhamalai - Sonasela Barathi
50. Thiruvannamalai Vazhi Nadaipatham - Kirthanam - Sonachela Barathi
51. Arunai Yamaha Andhadi - Thimmappa Andananar
52. Arunachalesar padikam - Ramasami Chettiar
53. Arunachalesar Varukai Padikam - Velayuda Pulavar
54. Thiru Arunai Iruvar Irattai Mani Malai
55. Sonachela Venba - Iruvar Irattai mani malai
56. Arunachala mahatmyam - Prose
57. Arunachala Atchara Mani malai
58. Atchara Pamalai
59. Arunachalesvarar Uyir Varukkam padaiyttar pamalai
60. Arunachala Navamanimalai
61. Arunachala Attakam
62. Arunachala Pancharatnam
63. Arunachala Purana Kirtanaigal

64. Vallala Maharaja Kummi
65. Vallala Maharaja Nadakam

Sanskrit Work

1. Kenopanishad
2. Arunachala Stotras
3. Arunachalastakam.

Sthala Poems

Thevaram - Sambandar
Thevaram - Thirunavukkarasar
Thiruvachakam - Manickavachakar
Periapuranam - Sekkilar
Annamalai Venba - Guru Namasivayam
Annamalai Puranam - Saiva Ellappa Navalar
Annamalai Sadakam - Kanchipuram Sabapathi Mudaliar
Kartigai Deepa Venba - Puranigar Sonachala Mudaliar
Sonachala malai - Sivaprakasa swamigal
Thiru Arutpa - Ramalinga swamigal.

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23. Legend and the Festival

Legend has it that the practice came into existence following a dispute between Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma over who was the greater of the two. After some hindrance to their attempts to gauge their strength, the two prayed to Lord Siva for His Grace.

Their test was to find the top and the bottom of a blazing mount which was actually Siva. Lord Siva blessed Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma and said that He would appear as a jothi (flame) on top of the hill. It is to commemorate this event that the flame is lit on top of the hill during the month of Karthigai (Nov.15 - Dec 15).

Evidence from Tamil literature proves that this festival is one of the oldest in the state. It finds mention in Tholkappiam, which is believed to be more than 3000 years old, the oldest known work in the language, Jeevaka Chintamani (one of the five Kappiams) also mentions the Deepam as do the two old Tamil works Kar Narpathu and Kalavazhi Narpathu.

The festival begins in the Uthiradam (star) day in Karthigai and winds up with the Bharani Deepam lit in the early hours of the tenth day. The Deepam is lit at dusk, coinciding with a full moon, after the Ardhanareeswarar deity is taken to the "Katchi Mandapam" where the Panchamoorthis have already been kept.

The lighting of the beacon on top of the hill is the culmination of ten days of hectic activity in the temple town.

The highlights of the festival are:

Kalpagavritcha vahanam and Kamathenu vahanam

Rishaba vahanam,

Silvar car

Procession in five wooden cars.

On the main and final day of the festival, the Bharani Deepam will be lit in the Sanctum Sanctorum early in the morning. The Maha Deepam will be lit on the hill top on the evening (at 6 p.m). The Deepam can be seen even from a distance of 35 k.m. The lighting of the Maha Deepam will take place simultaneously with Deeparadhanam to the five deities in the temple at the foot of the hill.

Preparation for the Deepam

The Kopparai (Cauldron) is taken to the top of the hill through a seven kilometer long route. The cauldron, ten feet high and five feet in diameter is carried on poles shoved into three handles on each side. The task of carrying the vat is assigned to the Nadars,

who, numbering about fifteen, take turns to shoulder this sacred load.

Atop the hill, the cauldron is filled with tins of ghee and wick, which is made of "ghada" cloth measuring more than 350 metres. The wick has been donated by Thiru P. Kandaswamy Mudaliar for the last 37 years. This year (1992) the cost came to roughly Rs.3700 for the same.

According to Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Board (Thiruvannamalai) Assistant Commissioner, nearly thousand kilograms of ghee is used to burn the flame, which, when lit, shoots up to seven feet and can been seen as a point of light from a 35 k.m radius.

The ghee keeps the flame burning for nearly a week. At the end of it, after due ceremonies are performed, the Nadars bring down the cauldron.

On the day the Deepam is lit, devotees also trek to the top of the hill to make personal offerings of ghee which is poured into the cauldron by two Nadars and two temple staff, on attendance throughout. A long pole is used to pour the ghee into the vessel from about ten feet. The Nadars, of course, get a bit closer to the flame, as their bodies have become used to the heat.

At the top of the hill, there is just enough space to accommodate hundred persons.

Before lighting, the wick is immersed in ghee and then dumped in to the vat, which is already full of ghee and camphor. The whole concoction is lit at a signal (usually around 6 p.m) from near the temple where fireworks are set off.

[No non-vegetarian food is available in the town on the last day of the festival.]

The festival is well-known all over Tamil Nadu and is attended in large numbers. Actually in every home in Tamil Nadu can be seen rows of lights (oil lamps) lit in the front; and it presents a beautiful sight. It is a day of festival of lights.

Many people (in and around Thiruvannamalai area especially) have a habit of having their food for the day only after seeing this Deepam. People who are orthodox and who have religious fervour have this habit (of having food after seeing the Deepam) even to this day. This habit is prevalent in other towns too where they worship the bonfire (called Chokkapanai) and have the food.

Ramana Maharishi

The Sage of Thiruvannamalai

An aethist once approached Kanchi Paramacharya Swamigal, and put a question: "Without observing any vow, doing any worship, visiting any temple, performing any Yagna, can one attain the Supreme Truth?" Prompt came the reply: "Surely".

A perfect hypothetical answer to a hypothetical question.

But can one come across any living example to illustrate the above answer?

Surely. The Sage of Thiruvannamalai who graced the slopes of the divine hill Arunachala till recently, in the form of Ramana Maharishi is an example satisfying all the doubts of the questioner. He never visited any temple, never observed any religious practice, never performed any puja, but attained the Supreme Truth, nay - was the embodiment of the Supreme Truth itself. He like Dakshinamoorthi dispelled the darkness of all the sincere devotees by his eloquent silence. He never preached any cult, rather He was above all cults.

He never formed any sect, but people of all sects were drawn to him by his divine splendour. His reply to the seeker was very simple but it drilled to the core of the questioner and set him thinking. His talks were not lengthy discourses that needed elaborate commentaries by eminent philosophers, but so plain that even illiterates understood the essence and benefitted. He was not a mythical figure belonging to bygone legendary ages, but lived among us, as one of us, till very recently, sleeping, eating, playing with children and working like us. It is a matter of great pride that Tamil Nadu produced such a divine spark in flesh and blood who in this land of Siva was a Sadasiva Brahman.

His physical frame has passed away. But his spiritual aura lingers. Let us try to know a little about his life, and it is not an easy task.

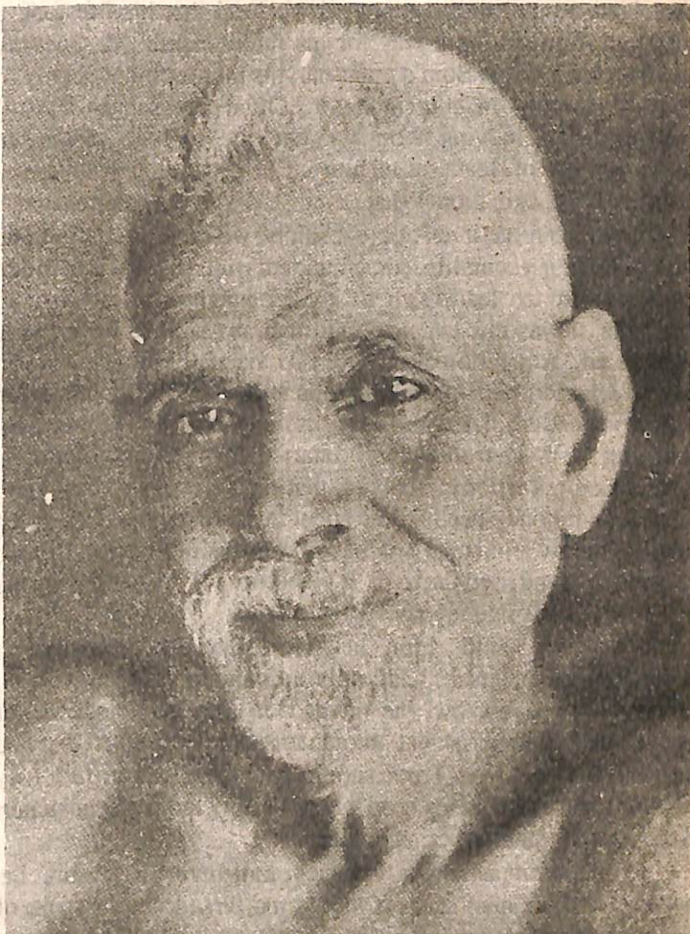
Once Maha Yogi Aurobindu was approached by one, who requested some details of his life, to enable him to write his biography. Aurobindu told him, "What is there externally for you to view and write, except sleeping and eating like all? My life is purely internal, a revolution of the Soul - and how can your pen capture that spirit and present it on paper?" The same holds good for Ramana Maharishi also and no pen however dexterous can snatch even a miniscule of His life.

It is not an accident that persons become great. It is a pre-ordained grace that great men are born. Even at the time of birth, there are clear indications that the present child will blosom into a Super-human. A perusal of the lives of Sri Aurobindu, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda will clearly reveal this aspect. It is so in the birth of Ramana Maharishi also.

It was the year 1879, December 29 was the holy day of Thiruvathirai. Thiruvathirai is specially sacred to Siva and Siva Himself is known as Adiraiyan. A spark of Siva probably assumed the form of a mortal, to live in this earth and enlighten all, by his living. When we want to express that someone got enlightened we use the terms, 'He attained Moksha'. Moksha is not a place far away to be reached. A great Seer has succintly put it that the longest journey is travelling inwards (only a few centimetres). Yoga Sikopanishad beautifully describes this as "Siddham Khizeney Moksha Upayadey". The dwindling of thoughts is the way to Moksha. Thoughts are the bondage that obstructs one from salvation. Ramana Maharishi was a supreme example of a mortal having attained Shahaya Samadhi - pure natural state.

It was on the Thiruvathirai day, a little after midnight that a child was born to Sundaram Aiyar and Alagammal in Tiruchuzhi. Tiruchuzhi is a tiny village, about 30 miles from Madurai.

His younger days were not conspicous in any way. He studied in Dindugal and Madurai. In Madurai in seventh and eighth standard education was in Scott school. The boy bore the name Venkataraman and about his scholarship, nothing much is known. Wrestling and swimming were his sports and he might have



indulged occassionally. It was at Madurai that his life took a different turn paving a way for his future sainthood. One day while pouring over Bain's grammar, his mind wandered only to find a mooring in contemplation. Often he used to sit still gathering his moving thoughts. On one such occasion an unknown fear of Death seized him and he went through all phases of dying in imagination. What remains after one's passing away?

If we scan the lives of great saints, we can clearly find one thing. In their young life, some incident triggers off the dormant spiritual fire, to lead them to greater heights. In the case of Ramana, it was this fear of Death that awoke the energy lying concealed. A mention of the word Arunachala, a town in North Arcot District, housing the famous shrine on the slopes of an equally famous hill, led him on in his hunger for Truth. Somehow locating the place from Atlas, he started on the eventful journey, after placing a letter in his book that he is going away on good errand and money need not be spent in searching for him. Even in that letter we find traces of his future Advaitic essence. Instead of writing 'I' he used the term 'it'. The word 'I' is going to be the very core of his philosophy.

Next we find him at Tirukoilur and finally at Thiruvannamalai itself. Clad only in a single garment with no thought for tomorrow, he landed in the sacred town of Arunachala. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa once remarked that one seeking the Supreme Truth should be like a person furiously attempting to pull out his head when forcibly immersed in water. Such was the state of Ramana then.

At Thiruvannamalai a barber volunteered to tonsure his head! Venkataraman cast off the sacred thread, the last link of Ego about caste. Visvanada, a minister in Kashmir responding to a higher call embracad sanyas and retired to Benares. He spent his time in writing and meditating. After some time he stopped writing too. When asked why he gave up the innocent habit of writing he replied "Because I have a desire to write". It is not the writing, but the desire to write that is the obstacle. Henceforth he was called Khasta Sanyasi - Khasta means corpse. The desire of

caste distinction and superiority, symbolised by the sacred thread snappped and Venkataraman's ego completely vanished. "Kara thala Bhikshey, Tharu thala Vasey' - accepting food in the palms and residing under the trees - was his mode of life.

In the spacious courtyard of the first prakara of the Thousand pillared Mandapam of the Arunachalesvara temple, is an underground cell enshrining a patala Linga and this sheltered spot became his place of meditation. Sitting in that dark, damp cell for hours at a stretch completely lost in samadhi, his body developed sores and worms wriggled in his raw flesh. Local urchins curiously peeped in and began to pelt him with stones. Next he moved to the Iluppai garden in the temple itself for solitude. Some kind - hearted people sympathised with his neglected state and provided him with good food after bathing him. By this time he was known as Brahmana Swami and a few devotees gathered around him. Uttandi Nayanar and Annamalai Thambiran were the first disciples attracted to him. From the shrine he moved to Gurumoortham maintained by Annamalai Thambiran. His abodes changed to the mango grove. Till now he never revealed his identity and was observing silence. But due to the persistence of one devotee, he wrote Venkataraman - Tiruchuzhi. News slowly spread to his home and his relative arrived to take him home. But all his efforts proved futile and Ramana was steadfast as a rock. After hearing that her son is alive and living somewhere, would not a mother's heart bleed? How can Alagammal be different? She reached Pavazha Kunru, where the Swamy was then residing and all her pleadings moved him not. He simply wrote "Everything occurs according to Universal Scheme. What cannot happen will not happen even through best efforts and the best way is to be silent". These words proved prophetic!

And Alagammal became one among his devotees and took her residence permanently by her son's side. That does not mean she claimed any preference as a mother. Only she was one of the inmates till her end. It was at Skandashramam that her end came and a samadhi was built over her remains in the foot of the hill on the banks of a tank. A temple called Matrubhudesvarar now

adorns the place. Soon, Ramana too moved to this spot and enlightened his devotees from the tiled hall built adjacent to the mother's samadhi.

A rectangular hall with one door always open led one inside. In the corner on a cot sat Ramana, clad only in a Koupina his mesmeric eyes sparkling. A famous French photographer Henri Cartier Bresson has succeeded in capturing a little of that sparkle. Devotees from all corners of the globe poured into that hall with a heart heavy with sorrow, doubts, anguish and ignorance. A darshan of this divine figure was enough to send them with doubts dispelled, sorrow subdued.

But things however good cannot last forever and his end too was drawing near . A small boil in his upper arm was diagonised as cancer - a malignant tumour.

Even that fatal illness became a silent preaching to others. Talayarkan one of the devotees cried in anguish "Bagawan, why don't you wish that tumour away, atleast for our sake?" "Did I wish for it, to wish it away? You all have been here soaking in this atmosphere. Yet you do not grasp that I never came and hence can never go" was his smiling reply. Dr.Gurusami Mudaliar who inspected the wound, informed others not to tamper with his body, but to leave it to him, to be dealt as he willed. An operation was performed in the Ashram itself and during operation, after refusing anaesthetic he sat as immobile as the wall behind him with not a frown in his face.

His philosophy was very simple. To every questioner he used to counter question, "Who asks? To whom these doubts?" Naturally he will reply "I". "Who is that "I"? Is it the body, or mind or anything else? Where has that "I" gone during sleep? Enquire, enquire deep into the recess of your heart and what will unfold is Liberation."

It was April 15 in the year 1950 that his mortal body passed away. A great miracle occured then. Exactly at 8-45 p.m. a meteor - like star of brilliance shot up in the sky witnessed in several parts of India. His spirit merged with divinity at the same time.

மணிவாசகர் பதிப்பகம்

நிறுவனர்	: தமிழவேள் ச. மெய்யப்பன்
நிறுவிய ஆண்டு	: 1961
வெளியீடுகள்	: 600
பல்கலைக்கழகப் பாடநூல்கள்	: 60
பரிசுபெற்ற நூல்கள்	: 40

தமிழ்நாட்டில் தலைசிறந்த பதிப்பகங்களுள் ஒன்று.
'எல்லாம் தமிழால் முடியும்' என்ற
குறிக்கோளுக்காகப் பாடுபடுகிறது.
தரமான நூல்களை வெளியிடுவதையே உன்னத
நோக்கமாகக் கொண்டிருக்கிறது.
ஆராய்ச்சி நூல்கள் வெளியிடுவதில்
முதலிடம் பெறுகிறது.
இலக்கிய ஆய்வுக்குப் புதுவழி வகுத்து, தமிழ்
மறுமலர்ச்சிக்குத் துணைநிற்கிறது.
புதியதோர் உலகம் காண, எல்லா வகையிலும்
உழைத்து வருகிறது.
அறிஞர்களின் சிந்தனைப் பதிவேடுகளாகத்
திகழ்வன எமது நூல்கள்.

சிறந்த அமைப்புடையவை
சீரான விலையுடையவை
மொழிக் கொள்கை
விலைக் கொள்கை
இவற்றில் தெளிவான திட்டத்துடன் நூல்கள்
வெளியிடும் பதிப்பகம்.